

MUNSTER ABBEY,

A ROMANCE:

INTERSPERSED WITH

REFLECTIONS

ON

VIRTUE AND MORALITY:

WRITTEN BY

SIR SAMUEL EGERTON LEIGH.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

Virtue, our present peace, our future prize.

Man's unprecious, natural estate,

Improveable at will, in virtue lies I

Its tenure sure; its income is divine.

YOUNG.

VOL. I.

EDINBURGH:

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1797.

ADVERSE TESTIMONY

LADY LIEKE feels a sensible person
 sure in presenting her grateful acknowledgments
 to the Public, for their favourable
 reception of *Minister Abbey*, at the same
 time that she delivers to them, with
 trepidation, *Work so long*
 proposed. — *in the afflictions*
 attendant on her unfortunate situation,
 every step she took in collecting and
 connecting the late *Samuel's* scattered
 papers, was *overshadowed* by sorrow,
 and impeded by inexperience; — and
 in consequence, produced more delay
 than she had foreseen. — To embrace
 and accomplish every idea of her de-
 parted Husband, was difficult and
 nearly impossible to her. — *Friends*, how-
 ever, and anxiety have not been spared



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ADVERTISEMENT.

LADY LEIGH feels a sensible pleasure in presenting her grateful acknowledgements to the Public, for their Patronage of MUNSTER ABBEY, at the same time that she delivers to them, with trepidating hand, the Work so long proposed.—Immersed in the afflictions attendant on her unfortunate situation, every step she took in collecting and connecting the late Sir Samuel's scattered papers, was traversed by sorrow, and impeded by inexperience ;—and, in consequence, produced more delay than she had foreseen.—To embrace and accomplish every idea of her departed Husband, was difficult, and nearly impossible to her :—Pains, however, and anxiety have not been spar-

ed :—and, though Lady Leigh is conscious, that accuracy in execution, and brilliancy in composition, may not at all times have been attendant on her wishes, yet, she trusts that the refined and sympathetic Reader will find some touches of feeling in the Work, which may induce him to repel the shaft of censure from the unprotected Female, who has the honour to address him these lines.

TO
HER GRACE
THE
DUTCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH.

MADAM,

THE principles on which this humble composition is founded, urged me to seek your Grace's Patronage :—for who are so *justly calculated to head* the cause of Virtue, as they who exhibit, in their own life, the most illustrious pattern of it?—Encomiums, however, I feel are quite unnecessary :—The actions of the worthy are their best panegyric. I forbear those observations, which with justice I could advance on the subject, from a conviction, that a truly benevolent heart enjoys too much rapture in its own secret reflection, ever to feel an inclination to be recommended to Public Approbation.

Permit me, Madam, to express my warmest gratitude for a countenance which honours this production with an encouragement, greatly above what I can persuade myself to believe it merits :—*I can but hope, with sincerity, my REAL INTENTIONS MAY BE DISCOVERED :—*

Under such circumstances only, can I expect forgiveness, for intruding on your Grace, and a liberal Public, by ushering a Work into the world, which, from its conscious burden of innumerable faults, trembles like a criminal on trial, who doubts the possibility of an acquittal.—I have the honour to be,

With the most profound respect,

MADAM,

Your Grace's most obedient,

and very humble servant,

SAMUEL EGERTON LEIGH.

PREFACE.

I HAVE offered this book under the title of a Romance, and such I have made it, by forming a story entirely from imagination, which constitutes it a work of that nature:—My contract is consequently fulfilled.—I have, however, endeavoured to avoid what is but too often a fault in this species of writing, all extravagant descriptions of supernatural scenes and events, which it is impossible ever did, or can take place. These representations, in general, tend but to mislead the reader; and if, through the ingeniousness of their formation, they afford the diversion of an hour, it is amusement unaccompanied by instruction, and, as such, dearly purchased at the irrecoverable price of time lost.

I have confined myself to a description of such circumstances as come within the scale of possibilities. The picture which is drawn nearest to life, never fails to afford a

considerable degree of entertainment to its beholders, who, as they gaze, cannot but admire the artist's skill;—so likewise it is in productions of a literary kind,—the nearer they approach the common scenes of life, the more gratifying do they prove to the intent peruser. I mean not, by this observation, to place myself on a par with a skilful artist:—I have not vanity sufficient to consider myself entitled to a seat so exalted:—but, though very humble are my efforts, and however incompetent I may be to the task of dealing out instruction, I will not risk the possibility of gaining an end so desirable, as to pursue a path, which, however ingeniously paved, never can produce materials that will assist in any degree towards edifying the mind.

The mind of youth is frequently involved in a variety of extravagant ideas from novel reading; such as fancying itself in love with every pleasing object it views,—and loved, in return, by every heart, whose owner, from familiar good nature, bestows a smile.

The promotion of these imaginations I have likewise avoided :—Let it not be supposed, that from these observations I am endeavouring to stigmatize the principles of other works, to enhance the value of my own :—this is by no means my plan :—I rather chuse to build my habitation on new made ground, in preference to raising my structure on the ruins of any individual :—besides, there are several late productions, under the denomination of novel and romance, that can set at defiance the pen of the most expert critic,—a like production I do not venture to aspire to : in my frail pages, the critic probably will find matter to favour his designs, and to afford him some considerable degree of employment.

I have only represented the defects of some writers, to introduce the principles on which my narrative is founded. Virtue and morality are the grounds on which I have sallied forth, and I could wish that their inestimable qualities were more generally diffused in the hearts of all my fellows.

I may, as a very young man, be considered presuming, in venturing to treat on subjects so truly important and interesting,—subjects so much better adapted to the pens of men, whose years bespeak them fit objects for a grave and sentimental exploit; but, as every thing is centered in intention, I am content to run all hazards.

To excel in my attempts I can scarcely expect; but I would rather be an humble espouser of a moral cause, than the first man on the list of what may be termed licentious witts; or, in other words, promoters of lascivious mirth, at the expence of honour, humanity, charity, every christian virtue, and, finally, their own permanent happiness, which a moral course of life should have ensured to them from the first outset.

: This does not appear to be the age in which morality is prevalent, either amongst the old or youthful classes of mankind; which renders it still more necessary that new authors should stand forth and endeavour to promote it, by extolling its worth,

and pointing out the many advantages that may be derived from an adherence to it.

Though many attempts of this texture may be weak, and mine may be justly classed amongst those which are deficient, still, out of many feeble endeavours, some little good may doubtless be obtained; and every step towards a righteous course, is a considerable assistance to the arduous traveller, who diligently labours for a seat of permanent repose.

From these few observations, the reader will become acquainted with the true nature of my designs. I shall therefore conclude this introduction, with presenting my Work to the notice of a Public, whose candour and liberality has been sufficiently described by others, to render any encomiums on the present occasion necessary. Should it be condemned, I shall rest content that, from the judgement of so many persons of superior talents and understanding, it merits condemnation:—should it be approved,—I shall feel highly flattered and gratified; not from simply gaining public applause,—but,

that I shall have the satisfaction and peculiar happiness in reflecting some trifling compensation is made, as an humble return for the very liberal and unexampled countenance bestowed on this undertaking;—for a proof of which, a reference is offered to the List of Subscribers.

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MUNSTER ABBEY.

CHAP. I.

MR BELFORD was a man happily possessed of a fortune, ample as his wishes, and independent as his spirit. Munster Abbey fell to him by inheritance, and was delightfully situated on the romantic banks of the river Ex in the county of Devon. He inherited, too, the virtues of his Ancestors : in him they were all combined ; and that they might be perpetuated by an honourable connection, was the unceasing wish of his true friends.

MUNSTER ABBEY and its environs abounded in beauties : on one hand, an expansive and richly cultivated country, raised the admiration of every beholder ; and the flourishing state of its commercial territories was an unfailing object of pleasure. On the other hand,—the distant hamlet,—the village spire,—the rustic minstrels,—and rural gambols, all united their advantages to embellish the scene, while its majestic head aspired to the skies, and seemed to hail a kindred Paradise ! It had borne the appellation of Munster, time out of mind ; and from tradition was so called, in honour of some part of Belford's family who were its founders : Much taste was displayed in its structure, and judgment in its site. The charms by " Nature's own sweet and cunning hand laid on," left scarcely an improvement to bestow,—yet all was tried to make it peerless, and tried with so much skill, that a judicious observer might have been deceived, and have given Nature credit for the offspring of Art, in points that were no inconsiderable steps towards perfection. The winding river,—the variegated foliage,—the scattered cottages,—and their unruffled te-

nants, were grateful objects to the mind of the Philosopher and Moralist:—the Poet too, might there have fixed his temple, a retreat the muses must have gloried in:—there might every rapturous flight have been indulged, extended, and improved.

Belford invariably visited Exeter at one season of the year, having many friends who resided in that quarter; but so much was he in estimation with his own villagers, that he never left them, if but for a few days, that they did not mark his absence with unfeigned testimonies of regret, and never failed to welcome his return, by the most lively and heartfelt rejoicings and gratulations.

Such are the flattering attentions to which the virtuous man is entitled: and to be entitled to such is sure as great a blessing as we can hope for in a world of tumult.

His absence from Munster Abbey, at one particular period about to be described, was stamped with something more than ordinary. He had promised to sojourn for some little time at Exeter with a friend, the perform-

ance of which formed the most memorable event in his life.

A young lady, of extreme beauty and accomplishments, happened at that particular time to be on a visit in the same house.

The delicacy of Miss Melville's manners conspicuously shone in proportion as she appeared unconscious of them ; and an heart, far less susceptible of female merit than was Belford's, might have confessed her power, without hazarding the imputation of weakness. She was amiable in the eyes of all : but in his she had no rival, and there needed but little penetration to discover, that the passion he had so early imbibed, was grateful to her heart, and repaid with all its energy. This Belford anticipated with unspeakable satisfaction, notwithstanding a degree of reserve her sex and situation compelled her to adopt. It was clear she loved him, though she strove to hide it : Love teaches cunning even to innocence ; but when it once has fixed upon the heart, 'tis sure at intervals to breathe its passion.

Out of all the fashionable adventurers whose attentions she had really fixed, not one had been so fortunate as to be well received, at least beyond what good breeding and civility warranted. How flattering this to a man, whose whole soul was centered in the possession of so estimable an object! to what transporting prospects did the thought give birth!

Miss Melville was a descendant of respectable parents; but her father dying during her infancy, in rather contracted circumstances, he bequeathed her no more than the scanty pittance of one thousand pounds to her fortune. Of this Belford was apprized; but fortune not being his object, as too contemptible to be placed in competition with the exquisite delights resulting from a sentimental connection, he suffered it not to have any influence over his actions: and a system of integrity which had invariably directed his conduct, forbid his admitting it, even as the most distant consideration: For, however indispensable to a certain degree, an attention to independance may appear, as a great step towards the comforts:

of life ; yet, happily enjoying such himself, the want of it formed no obstacle to his addresses where his affections were honourably and judiciously placed ; and he viewed marriage in too serious a light, to make a traffic of his person, and barter the substantial blessings of domestic felicity, for the fleeting gratifications which money can procure. Oh ! that this sacred system of proceeding was more universal :—that the brows of my fair country-women might for ever be adorned with smiles, and the registers of libertinism sink into oblivion for want of victims to swell its pages.

An eminent writer asserts, “ that every woman is at heart a rake.” It was a bold assertion :—but did he examine the causes that too often give rise to it,—did he consider the frequent slights that prompt them to resources they could never have flown to, had home been the scene of peace they had reason to expect it would ? Could a woman of delicacy have recourse to a gaming table, and all the fashionable etceteras of the present age, for relaxation, was not her time rendered irksome by disappointments, and

her prospects darkened by continued marks of indifference? For if youth and beauty ensure not the comforts they are calculated to invite, little can be hoped for, when those attractions are passed. This it is that fills our daily prints with paragraphs that are a scandal to the promoters of them, horror to every reader, and the dread of those whom it is not impossible but chance may lead into the same calamity. Belford was a man of superior understanding and mature judgment; his ideas of happiness decisive; for it had been the business of his life to fix them on a firm basis. The possession of a virtuous wife constituted the summit of his ambition: in Miss Melville, he beheld all his warmest hopes could aspire to.

“ She was her sex’s pride :

“ Nor think my tongue too lavish, if I speak her

“ Fair as the fame of virtue, and yet chaste

“ As its cold precepts, wise beyond her sex,

“ And blooming youth, soft as forgiving mercy.”

Miss Melville was a stranger to the little arts so injudiciously practised by her sex on the passions of ours: She had early learnt the infallible attraction of candour: Indeed, if

she had a fault, it was, that she too readily confessed the dictates of an unsuspecting heart. Fortunately, however, she was never exposed to situations that doomed her the sport of malice and hypocrisy, though a little caution with a prowling world is ever commendable.—She traced the heart of Belford in his face; and in it, all that was amiable, affectionate, and ingenuous; nor checked the passion which from virtuous and prudential motives she strove to conceal. Her fortune was small, and though the generous mind is ever proud of an opportunity to evince its disinterestedness and interest, she was persuaded it could never actuate the advances of Belford; yet she was ambitious of every advantage that could enable her to contribute to the happiness of one whose worth she considered far above every earthly reward.

Much time had passed in distant sighs, and looks of eloquence,—uncertainty on his side, and suspense on hers,—before he could summon sufficient fortitude to hazard the possibility of a refusal. Miss Melville knew not to disguise: yet, in opposition to her

fondest inclinations, she hesitated not to declare, that she at present aspired to no change in her situation : that her reasons were such as no arguments could remove : that she respected him,—that she esteemed him, but that circumstances were unfortunately such, as to make her marriage with him improper. Her pecuniary deficiency was the principal objection she could state—indeed the only one, for she had expressed no disapprobation of himself, and it was not difficult to read what passed in her mind : but her answer appeared so decisive, and she quitted the apartment so abruptly, that it was a doubt with him, whether he was authorised in resuming the subject on a future occasion : but as his whole prospects of comfort depended on it,—it was worth the trial ; yet the chance of again meeting a repulse, almost amounted to distraction. Letter after letter was written, and letter after letter consumed. A thousand schemes were formed, and not one carried into execution.

True love is ever timid, ever fearful of offending : There is a delicacy in its proce-

dures peculiar to itself; it is circumspect and unassuming.

His next interview, however, he resolved should determine his fate, no longer able to support a state of mind labouring under incertitude, which the contradiction of her actions and looks had thus affected.

She frequently strolled at an early hour of the morning about the garden, with some favourite author: Belford had sometimes been her companion in these rambles: He panted for the morning on which he was bent once more to make known his wishes—It arrived, and he perceived her from his window unusually pensive. He seized the opportunity, and, before any of the house were yet stirring, he joined her in her walk. There was a mutual embarrassment in this rencontre not to be described. She knew his intentions--was not displeased--yet dared not encourage them. A few minutes were employed in common-place observations on the weather, and the beauties of the morning, but they were too puerile to last, particularly when the mind of each was occupi-

ed by a concern of so much importance as already mentioned. To be brief, he renewed the propositions of a former meeting with augmented ardour and generosity,—entreated her, as she valued his peace of mind, never to name as a misfortune what he considered a blessing, since it gave him the power of convincing her that he loved her for herself alone. Filled with gratitude that flowed from her eyes, she could make no reply; but many days did not elapse before the confession he wished fell from her lips.

“ Oh Belford,” she exclaimed, “ the liberality that has appeared in you, has been my joy and admiration. My heart, from your first declaration, has throbbed with mingled and indescribable sensations towards you, and it has been with much difficulty that I have restrained the transports the frankness of your conduct has inspired. I have asked myself a thousand times, whether a precipitate decision is not less faulty than too much precaution with a man of sentiments so noble :—It surely is—No longer will I then suspend the moment, but, waving further ceremony, de-

clare, that if you can esteem me worthy of an affection I am but too proud to possess, my hand and heart are your's; and be assured that my happiness, not less than your's, depends on your acceptance of them." Belford pressed it to his lips—their hopes and wishes beat in unison,—and heaven seemed to sanction the contract.

The impatience of Belford was not to be subdued :—He suggested an immediate performance of the enviable rite, which, however congenial to her own desire, she resisted with all the prudence that duty prompted; and, notwithstanding she had already completed her one-and-twentieth year, yet the same sacred impulse of affection, which invariably directed her actions, failed not to influence her in the most important period of her life. The conduct of Mrs Melville had been ever stamp'd with tenderness; and there are very few instances when a child will deviate from the principles imbibed in its infancy. Filial fondness is implanted by Nature, improved by education, and, when strengthened by gratitude, is immoveable. Miss Melville wished to acquaint her mo-

ther of the step she was about to take, fearing that, if adopted rashly, it might cause an indifference and coolness in the two families, than which nothing can be more grating or mortifying.

Belford listened attentively, and was enchanted at her ingenuousness and generosity; but he remarked, that her writing might procrastinate his wishes, and that procrastination be accompanied by some unpropitious circumstance. He entreated her not to create or entertain any painful apprehensions on the score of silence for the present,—assuring her he would hereafter undertake to correct every apparent impropriety, and render every objection her fears had formed, too unimportant to cause serious consequences: He therefore begged she would permit him to procure the licence, and adjust matters as expeditiously as possible, selecting a few friends to attend the celebration. Miss Melville, equally ambitious to conclude the treaty, needed no farther persuasion, and, scarcely investigating the weight of his argument, assented to the event on which hung all her hopes. Bel-

ford lost not an instant, (her consent once obtained) and a very few days saw him possessed of all that was dear to him on earth, to the infinite satisfaction of those who witnessed the ceremony.

Belford was at this time in his twenty ninth year—a man of majestic appearance, and fascinating address, with a commanding and expressive countenance, the perfect picture of an heart fashioned by nature for the tender offices of friendship and benevolence.

Mrs Belford needed only to be seen, to be admired. A kind of sympathy in their dispositions bespoke that they were formed for each other, and every thing seemed to promise the fairest extreme of that state that never admits a medium. Messengers having been previously dispatched to Munster Abbey, in order to regulate the entertainment of the day, and prepare the domestics for the reception of their inestimable lady,—the new married couple immediately after breakfast, with their party, repaired to that happy mansion, so perfectly calcu-

lated to promote the soft delights dependant on domestic retirement.

Mrs Belford proved not the sprightly companion on her journey, she generally appeared on most occasions, though every pace was an advancement to the period of all others the most enviable ;—nor was she insensible of it,—but every idea was pressing on her mind,—it was an awful moment,—and, though she had no fears, yet the change of situation warranted every emotion.

As each hour assisted in familiarizing Mrs Belford to her new situation, she gradually became more composed and collected ; and, towards the conclusion of the journey, resumed her wonted vivacity. The heart of Belford was proportionably elated, and, with all the ardour unfeigned affection inspires, anticipated those days of domestic felicity, without which existence is scarcely worth the toil of supporting, and with which the adverse shafts of fate are pointless. The augur was universal, and those who saw them joined, were conscious they should see them happy.

At length, the peaceful village of Munster dawned on the sight,—soft scene of harmony and repose,—the sun shone with unusual lustre,—the trees had gained new beauties,—the verdure additional charms,—the very birds, with more than common minstrelsy, welcomed the happy pair.—Perhaps it was not so: but the mind, attuned to pleasure, will find joy in every thing. Need it be said, 'twas thus they were influenced:—Then why did a gentle tear steal down the cheek of the amiable bride?—The sublimity of the scene had rendered her sensations two exquisite:—'twas notwithstanding a gratifying moment, and who would have checked it—"Sure," she exclaimed, (and hardly knowing that the spoke,) "this place was formed by Heaven, to crown an attachment directed by its own unerring hand! Oh Belford, what boundless transports break on my mind, as I contemplate this fairy spot:—In what language shall I describe the joys that seem to spring from the event of this day?—Never sure till now had I yet formed any thing like an adequate conception of what true happiness consisted;—but in you, Belford, my every hope is centered,

nor is it in my power to express half what I feel." He embraced her with the sincerity of a fond husband, conscious of her excellent qualities, and wanting terms to impart some share of the gratitude with which his heart was loaded, for the confidence she had reposed in him, by bestowing her invaluable self upon him.

As they approached the Abbey, whose sweet sequestered bounds shone like the smiling seat of calm content, they were welcomed by the greetings of the village bells, that echoed through the venerable roof with awful cadence, adding a charm to every peal,—the little spire from whence they issued was bent withall, and seemed ambitious to unite some token of joy, at the wished for arrival of the virtuous pair.

As soon as they reached the majestic gate, they discovered the poor assembled from many miles around, prepared to congratulate them in their stile of uncultivated sincerity :—there wanted not the blandishment of words to evince their raptures :—the language of the heart is simple,—and

flattery, which too universally pervades the bosom of the worldling, is a stranger to the honest bosom of the unlettered peasant.—Belford was the first that alighted from the carriage.—It was in vain that he attempted to enter the gate ;—for the multitude that encompassed him would not suffer him to pass, until each of them, upon their knees, had kissed the hand that had so frequently been extended to their succour. Who, in so exulting a moment, could deny that virtue and benevolence are their own reward !

All Nature bore the face of triumph.—The very infant offspring of the grateful throng, struggled with officiousness to quit their leading strings, that they might bend to their benefactor, as if by intuition taught that each had individually experienced their bounty. Mrs Belford's eyes were rivetted on the scene with rapture and admiration : As an indifferent spectator she must have been charmed,—then, what must have been her sensations to behold the man, on whom her fate depended, so idolized ! Nor were their endearments confined to him,—for, independant of her own merits, which were

easily discovered, she was entitled to their love, they warmly protested, as the wife of their adored patron;—nor would they allow her progress through the hall, without entreating to impress on her hand the same tribute of respect they had shewn her husband. The request was too flattering to be denied :—She granted it with an air of affability and condescension, which at once evinced the exalted character of her spotless mind ; and, in a manner truly bewitching, assured them they were conferring their favours on one, who really considered herself unworthy,—but added, it was not less pleasing, and that her endeavours should at least make them not repent their attentions. They followed her through the Abbey hall, and in one voice exclaimed, “ Oh happy, happy young lady, if there be a Heaven on earth, you will find it here, and the God of it is Mr Belford.”

How flattering was the salutation to her ear !—how promising her prospects !—what music could have been so sweet, as the heartfelt greetings of a grateful multitude : They vibrated through the vaulted arch

with accumulated effect.—It was the pride of Belford to preserve from decay the grandeur of his ancestors ; which, independent of the respect he bore its former owners, was more gratifying to him than the insignificant baubles of a modern date.

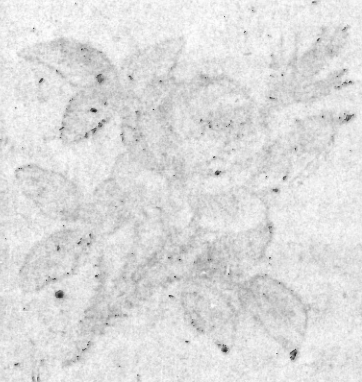
When Mrs Belford reached the great hall, she frequently paused to examine and admire the ancient appearance of the furniture, particularly the unwieldy structure of the chairs, the curious carvings of which could not but excite admiration,—and the weighty workmanship declared their origin to have been in those days, when quantity, as well as quality, was a consideration,—when every idea was not absorbed in the present gratification,—but when the reflection of those who were to succeed, had some influence in every concern. All, however, in this abode was valuable, and so substantial, that even time had scarcely yet committed any depredations. Music, and every denomination of festivity and mirth, was in readiness for their arrival :—The band struck up as they entered,—and a sumptuous repast, in the true style of old English

hospitality, was a desirable object to our weary travellers, to which they very soon sat down :—Pleasure presided at the board, and Good Humour was a general guest.

The poor were not forgotten :—and, according to ancient custom, a roasted ox was provided for them, which, with a lavish quantity of strong beer, was impartially distributed : Every description of pastime, too, was invented to complete the hilarity of the evening. Thus did it conclude to the satisfaction of all :—The crowd dispersed, after the usual ceremonies were observed, and, dictated to by Nature, yielded to the arms of sleep.



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MUNSTER ABBEY.

CHAP. II.

THE party arose early next morning, and, after taking leave of the new married couple, returned to Exeter, where, from a prior engagement, their presence on that day was indispensibly necessary.

Mrs Belford could not, by any effort, disguise the pain of mind she laboured under at the reflection of having embraced a situation, (though in every respect congenial to her wishes,) without first consulting her parent. She accused herself of want of confidence : and self accusations never fail to be the most poignant. On every occasion she had found her indulgent, kind, and considerate : there needed no reserve with a mother whose happiness was built on the welfare of her child-

ren—who had studied through life to promote it :—This, and a thousand such reproaches, harrassed her for hours ; she had no alternative but to write, and offer all that an offending daughter could.—Apology is too lame a term to a mother—exculpation she could not advance—she candidly confessed she had done wrong, and depended on her usual goodness for pardon. The agitation she experienced, after the departure of the letter, could only be equalled by Mrs Melville's, on the receipt of it ;—and every syllable, traced in extenuation of her conduct, but aggravated it ; nor did she doubt the connection's proving a disgrace to her family, and destruction to herself :—She conceived she could have no other motive for concealing it ; as a worthy character possessing her heart was certain of her permission to receive her hand,—and of this she ought to have been convinced :—the imputation of ingratitude fell heavily upon her.—Julia, her second daughter, who was universally admired for the sweetness of her disposition, and the exquisite refinement of her understanding, was affectionately sedulous in her endeavours to appease the dis-

pleasure of her mother, declaring that she thought it impossible her sister could adopt any imprudent measures, however she might be induced to act without her concurrence ; and therefore seriously trusted that she would moderate her resentment, and suspend every unfavourable conjecture, until she could learn the true state of circumstances ; as the very subject which now excited her indignation, might, on a farther examination, prove a subject to rejoice at. Mrs Melville was passionately attached to the incomparable Julia : indeed, her qualifications were such as to entitle her not only to a mother's tenderness, but the love and esteem of every one ; and, valuing her opinion and advice as Mrs Melville did, she would certainly have adhered to them, had she not, in this instance, felt persuaded there was something mysterious in the procedure, by her not having been consulted at an earlier period relative to so momentous a negotiation : She concluded the connection widely differed from what the letter expressed, and was convinced that her daughter acted under the impulse of guilt, by her not having given her an opportunity of

making those enquiries, which were at least natural, if not necessary, before an engagement was decided, which was to determine the prosperity, or insure the felicity of one, for whom she cherished the fondest interest.—Every argument but tended to augment her sense of sorrow.—The virtuous Julia for once pleaded in vain :—Mrs Melville was proof against comfort :—she conceived herself injured,—and the feelings of a parent once irritated, are never easily assuaged.—She resolved on pursuing them, and of being satisfied of her daughter's innocence,—or justifying her own suspicions : Without farther hesitation, she ordered a chaise, and, after *sorting* a few articles necessary for the journey, set off, accompanied by Julia, for Munster Abbey,—which she had too precipitately fancied was some contemptible habitation,—tenanted by an impostor,—but pompously entitled an Abbey,—for the purpose of misleading and deluding the credulous and thoughtless adventurer, whom chance might direct that way.

Stung by these mortifying suppositions,—she resolves to punish her daughter's seeming duplicity,—by banishing her forever from the bosom where she had ever till then held an enviable seat,—and the loss of which, scarcely the arms of a beloved husband could in any degree compensate.

The state of poor Julia's mind is not to be described,—it pitied a sister,—but it suffered too for a mother.

During this interval, Mrs Belford frequently expressed her uneasiness at the variety of conjectures she could not but form,—respecting the result of her letter,—with what impression it would be read,—and how Mrs Melville would be disposed to meet her. Belford omitted no opportunity of relieving her anxiety ;—and, if repeated assurances that all would end well, could have relieved her pain,—she would not long have suffered :—but it is impossible to command our feelings : and though we often depend upon that which we desire, yet we sometimes, (perhaps too frequently)

anticipate the evil we dread. The perseverance of Belford, however, in some measure, weakened the acuteness of her grief,—and she promised to exert her own efforts to conquer it entirely.

After a journey of five days,—the lovely Julia and her mother arrived at the romantic village of Ivy Bridge. As soon as the chaise drew up to the door of the inn, where they proposed refreshing the horses, Mrs Melville accosted the landlord as he received them, by asking whether he knew a Mr Belford, who lived at some little distance?

“What,” said the landlord, “Squire Belford of Munster Abbey?”—“The same,” she returned. “Alas!” sighed he, “too well, good lady!—would to heaven I had never even beheld him!” Conviction, at these words, darted with all its stings on the tortured mind of Mrs Melville:—The opinion she had already formed of Belford, was unfavourable, and there needed only this to confirm her in the justness of it.

In one moment she viewed her daughter deceived,—and the unfortunate man who addressed her,—the victim of his villainy. Few are the degrees of guilt beyond that of defrauding the industrious of their dear earned comforts ;—and such was the idea that possessed her, respecting his conduct to the landlord.

Even Julia began to apprehend her justification premature :—A silent tear, she could not suppress, betrayed her fears, and Mrs Melville was equally affected.

The landlord would have imparted consolation,—had it been in his power :—he begged, however, permission to relate some circumstances that pressed heavily on his mind :—They bowed assent to his request,—the subject was too interesting to be dispensed with,—it might lead to discoveries that would prove the best guide to their proceedings. After conducting the ladies to a private apartment, he began his narrative as follows :

“ I was the only son of an humble curate, who resided within twenty miles of this peaceful spot. Divested of every partiality with which nature endows us, I can safely say he was, in the true sense of the word, a good man. His language, without being refined, was salutary,—his arguments persuasive, though unimbellished,—and he practised his own precepts, which is more than the rigid moralist can always boast. Those hours that did not infringe on the avocations of his profession, he devoted to the pious purpose of radicating those principles into my mind, without which there is little prospect of happiness. Instruction and advice are breathed with double force from the mouth of those we respect:—it prompts inclination, and we feel proud to deserve the approbation of the worthy.

“ His efforts in the cultivation of my mind appeared to him successful, and added to his comfort. If ever he felt a regret at his contracted pittance, it was that the inconvenience would fall on me:—himself had exercised frugality, and he taught me the superior blessing of moderating my wishes.

Economy was a leading feature in his character ; but the small stipend which he enjoyed, only lasted during his life, and it was necessary to trace out some line of conduct by which I could live with credit, and adopt a certain method of supporting myself with comfort, when time or chance should rob me of his protection. It was not until I had entered my fifteenth year, that I was destined to leave my father. He engaged me for seven years with a Captain in the West India trade. I felt the parting pang almost too powerfully ; but the laws of necessity are imperious, and my feelings soon became regulated to the separation, though no time could ever reconcile it. The hope of again seeing him, and qualified to administer consolation to his drooping years, urged me to my duty with diligence and activity. I frequently wrote, and as frequently heard from him. His letters generally contained tender admonitions, which I never read but with an affectionate impatience, and ambitious resolutions to pursue.

“ At the commencement of the fourth year, I found my health rapidly declining—

my constitution debilitated and impaired by the intense heat of that destructive climate, so fatal to Europeans, and the insatiate grave of youth.

“ The Captain, to his honour, possessed a delicacy of feeling, and, to his credit, a superiority of commiseration.—He had been a father himself,—had lost an only child,—and the agonizing traces were not yet obliterated from his memory.—He marked, with regret, the ravages that sickness had made on my countenance :—he made me an offer, the generosity of which could only be equalled by the manner.—It was, to accept the residue of the time, to which he was entitled to my services. The tender of a kindness is never so ill requited, as when rejected : Every thing combined to make me embrace it,—and I could only thank him by my obvious want of words. He furnished me with the means, and my anxiety admitted of no delay. I procured a passage in the first vessel bound for England : and if the prospect of seeing my dear father was embittered, it was in the idea that I was

leaving a man, whose friendship towards me had been as soothing as disinterested.

“ My passage was expeditious, but melancholy : By intuition, I anticipated the shock my arrival would sustain, and almost dreaded to reach the spot I panted to behold.

“ I longed to press my much loved parent to my heart, but, instead of meeting him,—a man, his wife, and four children, had taken possession of the abode : They told me, with little ceremony, not knowing to whom they were detailing the unwelcomed news, that my poor father had three months past occupied a tranquil place in the earth’s cold bosom.

“ I fell to the ground, motionless and absorbed :—I could have wished for annihilation,—but the virtues of my father, like divine inspiration, thrilled on my bosom : He never sunk beneath the pressure of misfortune,—and to emulate him, was to be as perfect as Nature can be. I gradually became more composed, and was ashamed at having for a moment yielded to such emo-

tions. I could frame but one excuse for my weakness, which was the sudden information : for, though prepared to hear it, I was not prepared to support it.

“ I employed a space of time in contemplating the indispensable necessity of exercising the reason and philosophy recommended by him, which the grave had now placed an insuperable bar to ever more being repeated. I called up every sentiment for which I was his debtor, to bear me through this painful trial :—They were now doubly dear to me, like the portrait of an esteemed friend, after the dissolution of its original. As soon as I became sufficiently collected, I went with one of the family, who had voluntarily undertaken the gloomy office of pointing out the spot that encompassed his poor remains :—It was simple and unadorned : No marble urn, or chiseled inscription, decked the quiet haunt, or told his virtues, to consecrate it ! —it was enough that he was named, to hail it sacred : The fatherless,—the widow,—and the poor, were testimonies of his merits !—he had raised their sinking spirits,—he had

dispelled the clouds from their dwellings,—and changed the current of their affliction.

“ A kind of awe struck me, as I approached the place :—I shall never forget it !—and I hardly wished to suppress the emotions that seized me : Involuntarily I fell on my knees, as if inspired by the sainted sanctuary ; and, after bathing the sod with my tears, raised my eyes to Heaven,—for there he surely was to be found,—and breathed a fervent prayer, that his virtues might live in me ; for in such hope alone could I ever expect to join him. The melancholy, yet pleasing task performed, I returned to the cottage :—It's tenants wept by sympathy ;—and, if not completely incapacitated to admit alleviation, it was entirely from the charitable assiduity of those who kindly shared my pain.

“ They begged me to partake of their house and fare, until I could accommodate myself to my wishes,—and used every means to dissipate the grief which such an event could not but at first create. My gratitude was immeasurable :—I wanted words to ex-

press it ;—but each attempt was ineffectual. Tears stole down my cheeks, as I contemplated the goodness of Providence in recommending me to such friends, in so disastrous a situation :—yet every spot was a subject for melancholy,—for my father had trod it,—he had cultivated it,—had fashioned it,—he had enjoyed its produce !—Every tree, that with his own hands he had set, reminded me of him.—I could have blamed them for not withering when he died :—and the birds had a portion of my upbraiding, for singing when he was no more :—“ Trifles light as air,” are ponderous to a wounded mind ; and the more I saw, the more pungently did I lament and mourn the days that never could return.

“ To condole with me was to distract me ; for it was contracting the superlative comfort of my former state to the pitiable present ;—and such was I doomed to bear, from mistaken zeal of the neighbours, who made it a point to enumerate his virtues, as a proof of their sincere sense of regret, without reflecting, that it was as often rousing the severe pangs that I, who was doubly

sensible of his merits, had sustained. I did not long intrude on the liberality of my worthy host, though his conduct clearly convinced me he cherished me as one of his own flock : He omitted no opportunity to assure me, that every additional moment I continued with him, urged him to consider himself my still greater debtor. This was, in my humble opinion, the true method of displaying the principles of charity and benevolence ; and the only system we ought to adopt, in relieving those of our fellows, whose misfortunes entitle them to our particular attention and assistance.

“ Delicacy, at the time I was in indigent circumstances, checked me from offering my opinion freely on this subject : I therefore contented myself in the silent reflection on the justice of so pure a proceeding :—Probably had I then given my real sentiments, many would have censured me for hypocrisy, imagining that I spoke as a person distressed, and like one, who, being supported by the bounty of others, made such remarks, to dispel the obligations they might consider me laying under to my benefactors. Such

a precaution would perhaps have never occurred to my mind, could I have reflected, that I breathed in an atmosphere where every waft of the human heart was a new struggle to promote charity and benevolence to its full extent. But alas ! to my sorrow I speak it,—I could not think so :—A very few years experience deprived me of an opinion so favourable towards mankind,—although I was particularly fortunate in meeting with a few kind and disinterested friends ; yet, when I gazed on the general mass, nothing but horror presented itself to my imagination. In those moments of reflection I could have despised my own nature, but that I recollected our imperfections were occasioned by our own intemperance and misconduct:—that the heart of man, though depraved, could doubtless by perseverance be made perfect, otherways the prospect of lasting happiness, which with firmness I confided in, and for the attainment of which I only wished to live, could but be vain and imaginary.

“ As I am now, by the assistance of my friends and the bounty of Providence, raised

raised above the common frowns of society, —I cannot object to offer those sentiments of a system of charity, which a state of penury once induced me to conceal from public knowledge. It will appear certain that I can have now no motive for my observations, but to benefit those whom the adverse shafts of fortune have loaded with grief and oppression. When we administer comfort to those who labour under adversity, we are certainly conferring an obligation, which, however, only requires, for return, a grateful recollection that we have stood forward in the cause of humanity, and exerted ourselves to establish tranquillity in those bosoms, where misfortune had directed misery to take its seat.

“ When a man performs an act of common kindness, he becomes the greatest debtor himself:—the reflection that he has so far gained the confidence of an individual, as to obtain permission to grant a necessary relief,—is sufficiently gratifying of itself, to reward him tenfold for any service he is capable of rendering. The thought, that, by his exertions, he has wiped away the tear of

sorrow from the cheek, where penury and want had long formed a dismal channel to favour the progress of the stream of wretchedness, is too flattering,—too much to dwell on,—and yet to dwell upon it might be useful,—it might urge us to exert ourselves more generally, and more frequently, in behalf of those whose torturing pangs demand our strict attention,

“ The pleasure a man receives in dispelling the troubles of another, connected with the peculiar compliment he is paid by the individual who accepts his services, constitutes him the greatest debtor of the two :—The acceptor has only to be grateful for the benefit he receives,—and to study, by an uniform line of conduct, to merit continued attention ;—but the giver experiences a lasting and indescribable degree of rapture,—which he never could have enjoyed, but by permission of the indigent.”

Here Mrs Melville interrupted him, declaring herself charmed at the delicacy of his sentiments :—The eyes of Julia describ-

ed the tender emotions of her soul,— words were rendered unnecessary to give proof of her approbation.

The worthy landlord bowed respectfully, and continued.

“ A letter,” he resumed, “ which my good master the Captain gave me to present to my father on my arrival, proved a principal step towards my present state of comfort :—As it contained favourable accounts of my conduct, I soon obtained friends who attached themselves to me, and whose ardour to serve me was encreased by a recollection of my poor parent,— whose remembrance was held in general veneration. A subscription was set on foot for my support, and two hundred pounds were in a very short time collected. With this, by advice of the principal gentleman who patronized me, and who promised me his future countenance,—I engaged a small house in this village, and commenced business in the line of a publican ;—a line which, from choice, I should never have pursued, as it by no means accorded with

my wishes, or the life I had before been accustomed to lead ;—but it being represented to me, as the readiest way to turn such a property to immediate account,—I preferred adhering to the recommendation of those friends who had interested themselves so earnestly in my behalf,—to risking it in other attempts more agreeable to my own desires, which, however, from being contrary to the instructions given me, might have created their displeasure.

“ In this situation, favoured by a restoration of health, I continued several years,—unruffled by misfortune,—and tolerably successful in my dealings. About the close of the third year after my establishment in business, I connected myself in marriage with the daughter of a respectable farmer,—whom heaven has been pleased to preserve, to be a comfort to me, even to the present day. By this alliance, I became possessed of one hundred pounds more,—which enabled me to extend my trade, and make some improvements on my tenement.—”

Here he was again interrupted by Mrs Melville, who grew anxious to hear the part of his narrative relating to Mr Belford. But the good landlord, although not deficient in literary knowledge, which he had acquired in his early days by the tuition of his father,—still he had but one way of telling his story,—and, objecting to begin the tale at the wrong end, begged permission to proceed, promising he would soon conclude, and, he trusted, to her satisfaction :—She apologized for interrupting him, and, bowing assent, he continued. “As troubles,” said he, “generally surrounded us when least expected, so they befel me, four years since.

“I never, to my knowledge, was guilty of more than one piece of imprudence that might be stiled considerable ;—it was, in risking my little property uninsured ; however, I suffered for my neglect, which is the general way in which folly is rewarded.

“My wife, on a certain evening, having occasion to visit the cellar for the purpose

of gathering wood, and other articles for the service of the house, descended with a candle, to favour her progress down the dark steps :—an unfortunate spark lit upon some straw, and instantly kindled a fire, which burnt with such velocity, that, before any assistance could be procured, my little cot,—containing all my wealth,—was totally consumed.

“ The only comfort afforded me in this melancholy disaster, was in saving my three infants, who were reposing in bed at the awful moment, but whom I hastily snatched from the arms of rest, and, with the hurried steps of anxious affection, conveyed safely into the road :—the breath of open air, which I had before been accustomed cautiously to cloak them from, now proved for a moment the most desirable element.

“ Thus was I, from a life of tranquillity, and domestic happiness, suddenly launched upon the world, with my tender offspring, and loving wife, with nothing but prospects of misery and want constantly presenting themselves to my imagination. Not a roof

could I now boast to shelter us from the inclemency of rigid seasons. The leaves of the trees were all I could lay claim to as a covering ; and they could but be temporary, as the approaching fall would not fail to rob me of their services : but as the kind hand of Providence is ever prepared to extend itself to the relief of the poor and helpless, who never despair of its bounty, so was it pointed towards my service, when I as little expected a change so happy, as I before imagined I was on the verge of encountering a misfortune of so trying a nature.

“ The melancholy account of my miserable state, soon reached the ears of Squire Belford,—a man who knows no happiness equal to the alleviation of the wretched.”

Here the aspect of Mrs Melville visibly brightened.—The serene and lovely smile of Julia, decked by a tender tear of sensibility, which trembled down her cheek, were certain proofs of her excessive joy.

“ He, then,” continued the landlord, “ made every assiduous enquiry respecting

the nature of my misfortune :—his anxiety to administer comfort, would not suffer him to admit of the delay of a moment.

“ As soon as he became acquainted with every particular circumstance, and learnt that my character had never been disapproved in the neighbourhood, he hurried to this village in quest of me ;—even though the rain poured in torrents from the Heavens !—Ah ! good ladies,” he exclaimed,—with a deep sigh, accompanied by a tear of gratitude, “ I shall remember the day well,—who could forget it !

“ I was at this time in the house of a neighbour, who kindly offered me an asylum for a few days, until I could devise some means of seeking a future support for myself and little family. The father of my wife having been some time dead, and from misfortune, towards the latter end of life, deprived of his property, which rendered him insolvent, I had no friend to claim, or look up to for succour. Those who had exercised their influence in promoting my former prosperity, were now become either in-

habitants of the grave, or dispersed to some other quarter of the world : and indeed, had they been present, conscience would have checked me from intruding on their liberality, by involving them in new agonies at my state of wretchedness, which they had once amply guarded me against the danger of encountering. As soon as I was presented to Mr Belford, he requested that I would immediately repair, with all my family, to Munster Abbey, there to remain until some line could be struck out for my future maintenance. Judge what I must have felt when I discovered my friend in a man whom report had long told me was idolized !—I could not avoid seriously reflecting on the various times I had seen him pass my door, and how frequently I thought within myself, how little was the chance I had of ever claiming him for my patron, when I viewed the obscurity of my humble situation :—much less did I imagine that misfortune would have directed me to his notice : for, in the days of trouble, I have generally observed, that, instead of forming new friends and connections, we lose those who had long professed a sincere

regard for us, whilst the countenance of prosperity beamed upon our habitation :— Such is the flimsy substance of worldly attachment,—and, as such, it becomes obnoxious to those who have once experienced it's baneful effects.

“ When we arrived within the walls of the hospitable mansion, Mr Belford expressed a wish to be informed, at what I computed the whole of my loss :—I replied, that, to the best of my calculation, and without deviating from the truth, I considered the amount to be five hundred and forty pounds.—“ Poor man” he exclaimed dropping a tear as he spoke, “ what a serious loss.” As he concluded this sentence he left the room, to recover, as I imagined, the grief that pressed heavily on his heart ;—but I had scarcely time to form many conjectures, before he returned, decked with a countenance descriptive of a benevolent soul ; and, without any superfluous expressions to preface his kindness, presented me with a draft for the whole sum.

“ Oh heaven !” exclaimed Mrs Melville, in rapture and amazement, “ what a singular act of kindness !”

“ Ah ! kindness, indeed,” returned the landlord. “ I staggered with astonishment,—and, reflecting how little real charity was ever exercised in this iniquitous world, I retreated several paces back, with a kind of apprehension that he was ridiculing my situation, and mocking me in distress.

“ Such was the power of imagination for a moment, notwithstanding the amiable character I had ever heard blended with his name.

“ Ah ! good ladies, I soon discovered how unjustly I had censured my benefactor in secret thought :—He advanced,—and, again presenting me with the draught, said, “ Take it, and may it prove a compensation for your late misfortune !” I exclaimed in rapture, as I received the paper, “ Can this be real ?—and am I indeed not deceived !”

“ You will not find yourself deceived,” he returned : “ why this astonishment ?—I have exercised no more than what I should expect from others in a similar situation !—’tis but a simple duty,—therefore where is the cause for wonder ?” “ At this we all fell on our knees, and casting our eyes towards the heavens, breathed a fervent prayer of gratitude to the Deity. This duty performed, we attempted by words to express our thanks to Mr Belford ;—but he would not suffer us to address him on such terms ;—he was pleased to be a witness of our ardour in praising Him who bestows all our benefits upon us,—and would not interrupt us in devotions so properly directed. Our ejaculations concluded, he raised us from the ground, when, presenting me with a key, observing that it would favour my entrance into a certain house in this village, which happened at that time to be untenanted, and which, from having no claimant but himself, he had the power of disposing agreeable to his own inclinations,—he assured me I had his full authority to reside in it, rent-free, until I could

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boast of a property adequate to the value of five thousand pounds.

“ Oh ! to describe the sensations I felt in that moment, when I witnessed so singular an act of benevolence, is impossible. I have often reflected on it,—but could never discover words to favour the description it merited. This, ladies, is the identical habitation in which I have the honour to relate to you my narrative.

“ I immediately resumed my former business,—and, from indefatigable exertions, connected with the countenance and assistance of that truly amiable character, Mr Belford,—to whom I am indebted for all my present comforts, I have the satisfaction to reflect, that, at the summing up of each year's account, I have derived advantages and benefits exceeding my most sanguine hopes and expectations. This concludes the story I so earnestly wished you to hear, and I hope it has afforded you no cause to regret the delay its relation has occasioned.”

“Most certainly it has not,” returned Mrs Melville, “I am enchanted with your account,—and doubt not but my daughter has with equal satisfaction partaken of the pleasure :—There is, however, one mystery I could wish to have unfolded,—which is,—why you should regret ever having seen the face of him who was your benefactor and deliverer.” “Because,” replied the landlord, “I am yet unable to make an adequate return for his kindness,—which creates many an hour’s uneasiness,—lest it should be imagined I am backward in repaying, in the days of prosperity,—that which was humanely tendered to me in the moments of affliction.”

“My good friend,” rejoined Mrs Melville, “I will instantly dispel from your mind its present oppression ;—and it shall be accomplished by observations corresponding with your own sentiments, which seem at this time to have forsaken you.—If Mr Belford is the amiable character you conceive him,—which, from the account you have just concluded, there can be little or no doubt of,—you may rest satisfied

within your own bosom, that he feels happy, and even obliged to you, for having permitted him to alleviate the pangs you suffered in adversity ; consequently, was he apprised that you encouraged reflections so very, I may say, unpropitious, you would doubtless create his displeasure.

“ I cannot accuse you of a misconception of either the proper method of conferring or receiving a favour ; your observations, previous to your last remark, convinced me you were in this respect at no loss ;—but another degree of philosophy, attached to that which you already possess, would not, in my opinion, be in any way injurious or detrimental,—but, on the contrary, congenial towards the establishment of your domestic comfort and happiness.

“ If you object not to the counsel of one who feels inclined to offer disinterested advice, you will readily accept mine ; in which case, you will content yourself with the satisfactory reflection, that when a state of independence, sufficiently ample, affords you the means of more particularly proving your

gratitude for favours past, you will not be remiss in stepping forward, in testimony of your intentions."

The landlord expressed his warmest approbation and thanks, for the consolatory opinion she had given on the occasion ;—but still some degree of uneasiness hung upon his mind, from an apprehension that the world, which he considered censorious, would devise various projects to circulate unfavourable reports and conjectures of his conduct and inclinations.

Mrs Melville admitted his assertion to be true, that the world was censorious ;—and added, that vanity and scandal were likewise glaring imperfections of mankind ; and these, she justly observed, were the peculiar reasons why he should disregard the common opinion of the world.

"If the world," said she, "was replete with virtue, we should then be justified in studying to please it on every occasion, as we should evidently act in opposition to what is right, if we merited the disapproba-

tion of a race, whose pure and unblemished conduct had raised them to the summit of of perfection : but as iniquity seems to have ascendancy over this mortal and vitiated globe, conscience will better direct us, than the vain and faithless tongues of idle men. Individuals we may occasionally meet with, whose inestimable qualities and virtues may incline us to court an intimacy in their society ;—but we should steer from the corrupt mass with as much caution, as would the mariner his vessel from the gaping jaws of a destructive quicksand.

“ In short, virtue ought to be our guide in every plan we propose, and every step we pursue. So fortified and bent, we should scarcely ever bestow a reflection on the scurrility of man, unless it were in pity at their moral deficiency. To discompose a truly moral heart, is past the power of any earthly being. The frowns of those, whose smiles are not worth obtaining, can never sting the chaste and unpolluted bosom. The anticipation, my good friend, of a happy termination of events, cannot fail to counteract every ill that may befall us in

this transitory life : and, under so enviable a regulation, those troubles will doubtless appear trivial, that otherways might prove severe."

The landlord, with tears in his eyes, expressed, in striking terms, his perfect approbation of the excellence of her argument, which, he could not help declaring, had much relieved his mind. It was a lesson of morality too valuable to be passed over in silence ; and, as it had conveyed a considerable degree of comfort to his heart, in the same moments that it had impressed him with a most favourable opinion of his counsellor, he promised strictly to adhere to her advice, which had already furnished him with many pleasing hopes and reflections. Mrs Melville and Julia, anxious for the meeting they at length believed would be the occasion of much felicity, now took their leave of the good man, and, entering their chaise, proceeded on towards Munster Abbey.



MUNSTER ABBEY.

CHAP. III.

As they drove from the door, the lovely Julia elated with joy at the intelligence given by the landlord of the inn, embraced her mother with a degree of ardour, descriptive of a mind raised to the summit of bliss. Mrs Melville, equally elevated, and anxious to give a proof of her approbation, at once declared that her former rage was totally subdued,—that her meeting would be attended with different circumstances from what she had before anticipated and intended;—but that still she could not help feeling her mind in some degree wounded, from her not having been consulted, previous to her daughter's nuptials taking place; though it was her intention, as matters bore so fa-

vourable an aspect, to endeavour to conceal from observation, at least for the present, the pain that lingered about her heart. Their conversation, during the rest of the journey, consisted of innumerable pleasing reflections, on the prospect of happiness their imagination had pictured to them in a variety of forms.

Arriving in sight of the Abbey, which the post-boy, in obedience to the instruction given him, pointed out to them:—" Bless me!" exclaimed Mrs Melville with an air of astonishment, " with what injustice did I stile this noble mansion an inconsiderable cottage!"

The delighted Julia, exultingly returned, " and I trust my dear madam, you will find equal cause to chide yourself for having styled the owner an impostor, when you become better acquainted with his merits."

" Justly replied," rejoined Mrs Melville: " your opinion, my dear, I ever admitted to be valuable, and had I on this occasion paid more attention to it, I should not have en-

countered so great a degree of uneasiness ; 'twill however be a lesson to me not to be too precipitate in future decisions."

The Abbey was now in an instant lost to their view, by the winding of the road, assisted by fine groves of tall and stately trees, the rural monuments of long past years. Another turn, formed by the artless taste of nature, suddenly brought them to the Gothic structure, towards the great gate of which the post-boy speedily directed his course, and another minute favoured their arrival.

The falling of the waters of the Ex,
Pattering in gentle cadence down the rocks,
Which, with Aurora's purple tinted rays,
Cast a mild lustre o'er the vernal space,
Tun'd every heart to liberty and love,
And, as the villagers in truth exprest,
Hail'd Munster Grove a Paradise on Earth.

'Twas a bewitching, yet an awful moment :—The stillness of the scene bespoke a tranquil spot of calm content,—no traces of human progress were discovered, except by the rutted road where carriages had passed,

—the birds warbled through the trees, fearless of interruption, and every thing seemed united to hail it the seat of quiet.—Having rung the great bell, the solemn sound of which echoed in hollow tones through all the avenues, a servant appeared, to whom Mrs Melville addressed herself, demanding whether Mr and Mrs Belford were at home. He replied, they were then in the garden, and with permission he would conduct her to the spot.—She hastily alighted, attended by Julia, and in a state of anxious glee, followed the guide.

As they proceeded through the different courts, the roofs of which were richly carved and worked, and whose supporters were of stately pillars, embellished with the ancient order of Corinth, they gazed with astonishment,—and expressed much satisfaction at the antiquity of the buildings, and the variety of pleasure each scene afforded.

At length, arriving at the garden-gate, which, with equal precipitation, they entered, Mrs Belford, who was seated on a bench by her husband, at the foot of a

sheet of water which parted them from the house, suddenly beheld her mother.

Elated with joy at the unexpected visit, which hurried innumerable hopes and reflections over her tender mind in an instant, and forgetting all thought but that of flying swiftly to the embraces of a beloved parent, she rushed directly forward, pursuing, as she fancied at the time, from the straightness of her course, the readiest road; and with her eyes fixed on Mrs Melville, whose appearance had thrown aside the usual caution of her footsteps, she plunged into the centre of the pond. Oh, Heavens!—what a moment!—Belford attempted to fly to her assistance; but he had not proceeded many steps before horror overwhelmed him, and he fell senseless to the ground: Mrs Melville and Julia, swooned in the same state of insensibility.

The servant, unacquainted with the art of swimming, and apprehensive of his own fate, should he venture into water of such considerable depth, hurried with all imaginable swiftness to the house for assistance. What

an awful moment was this !—what was to be hoped !—all aid for a time suspended, and yet not an instant to be lost !—The mind prone to vice would have despaired : but the soul endowed with morality and confidence in the mercy of Him, whom we are justified in believing is all-merciful, can never cherish hopeless reflections. All help was still suspended—the struggling fair, unable any longer to contend for life, yielded to her fate with that composure, which the virtuous only can experience in the moments of departing life.—She cast her eyes towards Heaven, where her mind and soul surely were directed. In this moment of serious meditation, she was perfectly sensible of her danger, but the blessings of a pure conscience constituted her a stranger to every fear ; and, when she had reason to believe her dissolution was near at hand, it was with pleasure she reflected that soon she would be relieved from her dying agonies.

At length, when on the verge of closing her eyes from the dim light of this world, to open them in a pure and perfect atmosphere, the kind and liberal hand of Provi-

dence waved its influence o'er the dismal scene, and cast away the gloom.

How was it contrived?—Next to a miracle were the means by which the amiable Mrs Belford was restored to her distracted and disconsolate friends.

Faithful Munster, an old favourite Newfoundland dog of Belford's, named after the place, was the welcomed instrument of deliverance.

Approaching the pond in the critical moment, and viewing his mistress helpless in the humid space, he sagaciously plunged into the pool, and, seizing the end of her sash which floated, drew her cautiously to the side of the bank, where he contrived to raise her head above the surface of the water, by quitting the sash, and with anxious care holding her hat in his teeth, until more assistance could be procured.

What lessons of humanity do the brute creation frequently afford for contemplation!

How much happier would our lives be rendered, did we but exert ourselves as strenuously in the service of our neighbours, as in seeking our own comfort and independence.

The servants were by this time all assembled in the garden,—and, hastening to the spot, to look for, as they feared, the corpse of their poor mistress, found faithful Munster warily preserving his invaluable charge from the danger which threatened its annihilation.

With unexampled glee he loosed his hold, when he discovered assistants more potent than himself, who lost not a moment in snatching Mrs Belford from the jaws of death.

What an awful scene was this ! How near was the peace and comfort of a family being forever destroyed, when but a moment before they had every hope of happiness and bliss.

To what uncertainties are we exposed in this transitory life, where all alike are subject to misfortune!—None are secure.—Though, by a state of wealth, some few are flattered, still they are not exempt from those troubles to which the poorest individual on the earth is subject. Wealth only ensures us the smiles, and protects us from the insults of the narrow mind, whose notions, contracted from habit, and a neglect of education, conceives that virtue and merit literally consist in extensive possessions, riches, and power. And where, then, is the joy in wealth? If it but purchases man's paltry smiles, it proves a curse, and tempts us to destruction. Sickness will infect the poor man's cot; so will it invade the haunts of pride, and check their hosts in all their wild career. Death will, with equal power, enter there, a faithful emissary, proving no wealth can baffle his designs. All are born to trouble:—we often vainly think ourselves exempt; but there is one secure foundation for true bliss, and virtue is its only basis.

Mrs Belford was immediately conveyed into the house, and every plan adopted to favour her speedy recovery. Belford quickly gained new spirits, on hearing the joyful tidings of the safety of his beloved partner. Mrs Melville and Julia, by the same intelligence, were likewise much revived. Assisted by the servants, they proceeded towards the house with as much expedition as the feebleness of their state would admit. Their anxiety to embrace the once lost Mrs Belford, which the slowness of their pace failed not to encrease, could only be compared to the agonies we experience in dreams of horror, when pursued by a frightful something which haunts the imagination, and from which, for want of strength to favour our progress, we are unable to fly.

At length, arriving at the much wished for apartment, to their inexpressible joy they found her rapidly recovering.

Belford was too eager to wait for the sound of her voice :—he saw she lived, and he quickly embraced her ;—he then breathed a grateful prayer of thanks for her hap-

py restoration. She at once proved her power of articulation ; for, addressing Mrs Melville, who seemed yet involved in fears, she said : “ Ah, my dear mother, be not alarmed, all will be well :” Then, raising her eyes to heaven, with a look of confidence and benignity, diffused around her those pleasureable sensations of hope, alas ! one of the very few blessings allotted to the wretched. A sympathetic ejaculation escaped the lips of all,—and serenity once more pervaded the afflicted circle. From the assiduity of those who attended Mrs Belford in her indisposition, she became sufficiently recovered to join her friends at tea, and at supper took her seat, and resumed her wonted chearfulness and vivacity, to the joy and comfort of the whole family.

Thus was the hospitable Abbey,—over whose roof a temporary gloom had been cast,—happily restored to true felicity.—All things again looked gay :—no longer did the weeping eye cast dewy clouds o’er Munster’s tranquil bounds :—the peasants danced,—and in loud songs of joy their voices raised,—and rent the trembling air ; —the ancient village bells in concert join-

ed.—The smile serene which decked each countenance,—added new life and transport to the scene.

Mrs Belford now attempted to renew her apologies to her mother for her misconduct in not having apprised her of her intentions, previous to the event of her marriage taking place ; but Mrs Melville, unwilling to afford her any cause for uneasiness, and anxious to promote as much cheerfulness as possible, as the best method to dispel from her mind the serious recollection of the late disaster, concealed the original cause of her journey, by declaring she made it to congratulate her in person on the happy occasion.

This declaration concluded, she arose from her seat,—and, in a style descriptive of an affectionate parent,—clasped her to her bosom :—She then, in a manner peculiarly delicate, acknowledged Belford as her son-in-law,—expressing much gratification at being nearly allied to a man, whom she conceived merited her warmest esteem and regard. The compliment was too flat-

tering and unexpected to be replied to instantly by words. The looks of Belford afforded sufficient testimony of his gratitude, to render any other attempt necessary to offer a description.

The lovely Julia was not exempt from reflecting with pleasure on the beauties of this scene :—The trembling tear of tenderness,—which in its usual form tottered down her cheek, evinced the soft emotion of her spotless mind.

The evening was spent in a manner truly chearful and happy.

Faithful Munster the dog passed not unnoticed,—he received a hearty welcome into the parlour,—and was rewarded with many caresses for the important service he had rendered.

'Twas singular to remark,—he frequently during the evening placed his head in the lap of his adored mistress,—would fix his eyes upon her countenance,—and, as if by instinct, told he had delivered her from

death :—The circumstance was strange, as he had never before been seen in that position, unless with those who were his constant play-mates.—’Twas worthy of observation :—’Twas a picture of tenderness that reflected on human deficiency. She cheerfully acknowledged his kindness, by frequent pats on the head, expressive of her approbation ; which he received with apparent gratification at the notice bestowed upon him.

From the necessity of reposing early, after the fatigues of so bustling a day, the apartments allotted to Mrs Melville and Julia were ordered to be prepared for their reception, immediately at the conclusion of supper—soon after which they concluded the evening’s pleasure with a general embrace of ardent affection,—when they retired for the night, to experience, in the peaceful arms of Morpheus, that rest, which prepares and invigorates us to encounter the toils of a succeeding day.



MUNSTER ABBEY.

CHAP. IV.

THE next morning, at an early hour, the happy party repaired to the garden grove, under whose rural shade the hospitable breakfast waited their arrival. As they proceeded by the side of the pond which had so nearly proved the watery grave of Mrs Belford,—each, in a sympathetic mood, dropped a soft tear of sensibility. Harmony prevailed throughout the day.

Amongst a variety of occurrences, the narrative which the landlord of the inn at Ivy Bridge had given, was introduced. Some compliments in favour of Belford were offered on the occasion,—but his apparent disapprobation checked any enlargement on the subject. His ambition extend-

ed not to the search of public praise. The only reward he ever desired for his actions, was that which he never failed to experience,—a serenity of mind, cheered with transporting hopes of joining, at some future period, in scenes of unceasing rapture. What extatic sensations must such hopes convey to the heart !—How superior must the joy of such a bosom be, to that which the foul usurer experiences, whose mind is engrossed by a thirst after lucre, and who, like the heathens of whom we have read, worships, as his god,—a molten image, a corrupt mass of gold.

Mrs Melville, having passed several days at Munster Abbey, during which period experience convinced her that her amiable daughter Mrs Belford, was in the road of true innocence leading to permanent happiness, she, after encountering some difficulty of parting, took her leave, and, accompanied by her dutiful Julia, returned to Shrewsbury, where she failed not to receive the congratulations of all her friends, as soon as they became acquainted with the success of her expedition.

How different were the sensations they experienced in this journey, to the pain of mind they laboured under in the preceding : The contrast was indeed evidently great.

Tears of lasting wretchedness cast gloomy clouds over the one, which obscured from observation the natural beauties of a fertile country, whilst, in the latter, the brightening rays of hope, decked with the cheering prospects of prosperity, blazed from the soul, and in conjunction with the grand and dazzling beams of Sol, darted a lustre over the groves and meads, adding a richness to terrestrial scenes, already bounteously adorned by heaven.

The amiable couple were now left to themselves, in their little paradise, to experience those enviable joys and blessings, which the silken state of connubiality affords to those who fail not to reverence its sacred laws.

In conformity to the duties practised by the virtuous, Belford made it his daily study to encrease the happiness of his partner, by

every tender exercise of kindness, with which he was inspired from the possession of true and unpolluted love and affection. The task proved in no way difficult ; for one of the greatest traits in the character of Mrs Belford, was that of being content even in an humble situation, when she reflected that the endeavours of her friends were sincerely with a view to promote her happiness.—The result of an event never proved a guide to her feelings :—’twas the intention that ever held the reins of her heart ; and whether matters terminated propitiously or unsuccessfully, she was equally awake to a just sense of gratitude, which her delicate feelings urged her on all occasions to discover, where the debt of gratitude was due.

In these moments of bliss, however, Belford could not avoid casting a temporary damp on her tranquillity, by the relation of a moving tale, which conscience now induced him to believe he would be unjustified in concealing. It was a hard and cruel task for an affectionate husband to be the instrument to wound for a moment those feelings, he was ardently bent on tranquilizing ; but it could not be dispensed with—

the more he reflected, the more clearly he perceived the necessity of making known to her a circumstance, which, from his alliance, could not fail to interest her equally with himself.

In order to prepare her mind to receive a shock, which the feeling and benevolent heart only can experience, he frequently, in a delicate and distant manner, threw out hints, insinuating his wishes to unfold a moving narrative.—He continued this judicious plan for a number of days, to habituate her to expect a doleful account, that the unwelcomed intelligence might be received with more composure than a precipitate and abrupt recital would naturally occasion.

At length she expressed much uneasiness at being so long kept in suspense, and entreated he would not further hesitate, but at once describe the particulars of all that pressed so heavily on his mind.—“ Perhaps,” said she with a bewitching softness of expression, enticing him to begin the narrative, “ your trouble may, in some degree, abate, when I am constituted a partaker of

the pain : and should my becoming a sharer of your affliction, assist in the smallest degree to dissipate your dejection, I will cheerfully submit to any suffering, that may be the cause of producing effects so salutary and congenial to my desires ; and the fortitude with which I will conduct myself through the trial, shall prove an additional effort to dispel the gloom which hangs on your oppressed bosom.

“ Oh ! my love ! ” exclaimed Belford in rapture, “ and can you then, for my sake, summon a sufficient degree of fortitude, to hear with patience a very moving narrative ? ” Ah Belford,” she rejoined, “ I feel that for your sake I can prepare myself for an event of the most tragical texture, therefore suffer not your reluctance to give me pain, to be any longer the instrument of retarding an account, which conscience seems to justify your unfolding. My mind is indeed fortified ; and as I am happy to join with you in bliss, so am I equally desirous of sympathizing with you in affliction.” A hasty embrace of affection, evinced the e-

motions created in the bosom of Belford, at the tender refinement he continued to discover in every sentiment she breathed forth.

Finding her so well prepared for his recital, he led her into the garden, as being, in his opinion, from its retired state, the fittest spot to favour the description of a mournful story, which, doubtless, would create reflections too serious and important, to render any event desirable, that might disturb or intrude on their contemplation. The evening was serene,—the whistling breeze of Boreas was no longer heard,—and the cheering beams of Sol cast but another glow of warmth upon the earth, when the stupendous western mountains obscured it from farther observation, and detained, for a while, only those golden streaks in the Heavens, which inform mankind of the sun's recent departure. The birds had ceased to sing, and, rustling their little bodies in the trees, were hopping to the rural abodes, allotted by Nature to favour their repose.

Thus was every thing combined to promote quiet, when, seating themselves in the tranquil grove, Belford, in a pathetic tone of voice, began as follows :

“ Alas, my love, it is with the deepest sense of sorrow I make known to you I have a *brother* :—My regret at the recollection of so near a relative, is occasioned by a long course of misconduct on his part, which has deprived him of the esteem of the worthy, and banished him from those societies, where men are only respected for their virtues, and where the profligate would prove but an unwelcome guest.

Ah ! my dear, you should have, ere this, heard of him, could I have tendered any report in his favour, without involving my own conscience in the guilt of a false affirmation :—but too pungent were my reflections,—every thought directed on his past actions, served but the stronger to impress me with the heinousness of his offences, and to court me, by silence, to spare him the censure a mention of him would occasion.”

A deep sigh, at the conclusion of this sentence, escaped Mrs Belford ;—a starting tear, from her lovely eyes, fell in evidence of her pain of mind. Belford could have wished to have deferred the remainder of this doleful account to another period ;—but her entreaties, not to be left in suspense, obliged him to continue.

“ I am concerned, indeed, for your uneasiness, my love,” rejoined Belford, “ and lament that it is not in my power to preface my narrative with expressions of a more favourable nature.

“ As I could not mention any circumstances relative to my brother, that could afford him any claim to merit, I reflected, that, previous to our marriage, to have exposed his failings, would have been taking a step of injustice, from a conviction that it is ever adviseable to suffer news of an unfavourable texture to remain in obscurity, unless advantages can be derived by bringing it to light : but as, by our union, my love, you are nearly allied to this unfortunate young man, I conceive it a duty in-

cumbent upon me, to unfold every particular relative to his miserable situation."

"Oh Heaven! *miserable* situation!" exclaimed Mrs Belford, "can a Belford be miserable?" Ah! miserable, indeed,"—he returned,—“if still he lives, and if he no longer exists on earth. I cannot venture to reflect on what he may encounter,—but I will not encourage a suspicion so unfavourable; had the well constructed organs of life ceased to play within his callous bosom, and had his heart, which never fluttered with compassion, yielded its long exerted pulse to the chill embraces of death, I should, doubtless, through some channel, have been apprised of the event. The depression which at intervals weighs on my mind, is occasioned solely by my reflections on my brother's self created sufferings,—the pangs I sometimes fancy he sustains, are pictured by my imagination in such hideous shapes, that I could almost wish to share them with him:—what must such pains be realized?—When imaginary sufferings act so emphatically on the human frame. Poor fellow,—the twentieth

day of next month—will introduce him to his twenty seventh year :—He was born."

"Born!" exclaimed Mrs Belford, in great agitation, "where was he born, my love, not at Munster?"

"No, my life, he was not born at Munster;" returned Belford. "Ah, no, I am sure he was not," rejoined the incomparable Mrs Belford, exultingly: "for Munster ne'er gave birth to any one to pine in wretchedness: the offspring of this peaceful place were reared for better fate."

"Your observation," said Belford, as he heaved a sigh, "forcibly strikes me with a superstitious kind of idea, that my unhappy brother, Charles, was doomed to misery from his birth: for my mother being on a journey at the time she discovered symptoms threatening his appearance into the world, used every exertion to expedite her arrival at Munster,—from a conviction that home was the place best adapted to afford necessary comforts for an invalid,—but her indisposition encreased with such rapidity,

when she approached within twenty miles of this our happy seat of retirement, that it was deemed dangerous for her to proceed further; and, after the delay of another day, she was delivered of this unfortunate votary to prodigality. Thus was he excluded from the pleasing reflection of looking on Munster as his native place,—which appeared ominous, as if, from his creation, he had been marked to experience a life of woe and wretchedness.”—Here Belford mused a while; the extreme of agitation which pervaded his whole frame impeded for a few moments his utterance.—His amiable wife, leaning on his bosom, shared with him in silent reflection,—and partook of every emotion which awakes the virtuous mind to tenderness, pity, and compassion.

When he recovered from his pensiveness, he exclaimed, in a voice truly pathetic and affecting,—“ Ah! cruel remembrance,—how oft I’ve heard my tender mother say, that at the time unhappy Charles was born, the sullen gloom of lowering clouds darkened the country for many miles around; and, very strange to tell, that in the moment when the boy wafted his first breath upon

the atmosphere, from the high vaulted heavens issued, in awful peals, claps of tremendous thunder, such as the oldest shepherd in the county, who with his flock had often been exposed to tempests, ne'er before had heard;—and the lightnings which ensued, flashed so vehemently from the skies, that many hapless beings were deprived of sight:—the rain in torrents poured upon the earth, and, joined by powerful northern blasts of Boreas, laid waste innumerable fields and mounds, whence the industrious farmers had hoped to reap a liberal harvest, as a reward and tribute for their labours. Thus seemed the elements combined, as if in anger roused to execrate the birth of one, whose foreseen vices and pursuits would kindle the just resentment of the Deity. The scene, I've frequently been told,—was marked with every cast and sign of horror.—It is reported, e'en to the present day, that not a bosomed heart was known throughout the land that still could exercise its throb, but worked a double tide of pulse,—and every hand shook like the trembling aspin leef:—not even those escaped, whose owners long had boasted of strong nerves.

“ Ah, my love, my poor mother often heaved a sigh, when she reflected on that awful day:—’twas an event which doubtless expedited her dissolution; for though she lasted many years after, and made her family happy in her endearing society, yet she at best but lingered:—Her frequent sighs failed not to impair her constitution, which led her into a gradual decline of health, when at length, exhausted nature, too feeble any longer to keep in play the organs, which when motionless, deprive the body of life, sunk into a sleep, when, fearless embracing death, with a serene smile on her countenance, descriptive of her composure, she yielded every earthly claim, to seek in purer climes an happier fare.”

Here the lovely wife of Belford, whose mind had never received so severe a shock as this dismal account had given her, discovered much agitation and uneasiness; but the tender expressions of Belford, calculated to soften the most poignant grief,—soon shook oppression from her mind in a great degree, and, when he reminded her of her promised fortitude, every displeasing reflec-

tion seemed at once dispelled, and she resumed an air of perfect composure,—and urged him to continue.

“It is with deep concern (said Belford) resuming the account of his brother, that I inform you, Charles from his infancy discovered a roving disposition, and, as he ripened in years, so did his mind strengthen in those desires of dissipation, which, while they impair the health, deprive man of those sentiments of honour which render him more obnoxious than the meanest reptile. His almost unparalleled extravagance involved him in innumerable labyrinths of trouble, and, when he arrived at the age of one and twenty, instead of inheriting a fortune of five hundred pounds per annum, bequeathed him by an uncle, who little suspected what he had amassed by a life of industry and labour, would have been lavished away in a day of thoughtlessness,—he was compelled to surrender all for the benefit of his creditors; and, as his prodigality had overreached the limits of his property, every demand could not be discharged in full; but his creditors, who were all men of liberality,

spared him the pain of imprisonment, by submitting to the loss occasioned by his deficiency, and setting him at large.

“ When he perceived himself destitute even of common necessities, he began to reflect on the impropriety of his conduct. The cravings of nature only could rouse him to meditation :—honour occupied no space within his bosom ; he was a stranger to the principles of it, and knew it only by name.—As cunning, however, had taken a deep root in his heart, he at length applied to me for countenance : His apparent contrition afforded me great hopes of his reformation, and, anxious to retrieve so near and dear a relation as a brother, he found me as arduous in his interest as he could wish.—In order, if possible, to protect and save him from future difficulties, I received him at my house with fraternal cordiality, and assured him Munster Abbey should in future boast of two masters possessed with equal power, if he would but exert himself to constitute it a mansion so happily governed, He assured me, with tears streaming fast from his eyes, no temptation whatever could

again mislead him : that the countenance of a brother he dearly loved, proved the summit of his desires ; and that every other enjoyment in life appeared trivial, and not worth seeking, when compared to the enviable blessings of fraternal tenderness and affection :—he hoped, therefore, I would once more give him my confidence, and trusted I should not find myself deceived.

“ His peculiar style of argument worked so emphatically upon me ; his expressions appeared so just, and his sentiments so refined and persuasive, that I began indeed to think the principles of virtue had influenced his mind ; and a few observations further confirmed me in a belief, that the shafts of treachery were erased from his bosom, and that integrity had fixed her throne upon his heart. Oh ! my rapture at this happy change, was indescribable : I almost needed fortitude to bear such extremes of joy :—The restoration of a brother !—and an only brother too ! Oh, 'twas too much joy to dwell on,—'twas the summit of bliss !—'twas exstacy,—more than I ever conceived an earthly event could occasion !—’Twas certainly leading the mind

into an humble conception of paradise !—for 'twas a pleasure I could almost fancy something above what mortals were ever intended to experience. His conduct, for the space of three months, so well accorded with his late professions, that I really considered him a strict convert, and my mind in consequence became tranquilized ;—but alas ! my love, I was but for a while flattered to experience grief with double energy. In the commencement of the fourth month, a cruel desire to ramble again pervaded his unfeeling mind,—and, without offering any observations or hints that might have led to a suspicion of his intentions, he rose at an early hour in the morning, when scarcely the servants were all awakened from their slumbers, and, having forced the lock of a chest, which he stripped of the plate and cash it contained, he precipitately departed from the house which had sheltered him in his misery, to seek another asylum he knew not where, and to launch into, he knew not what. My astonishment, when I became acquainted with this unparalleled step of profligacy, may perhaps be conceived ; but I feel inadequate to the task of giving the

description. My uneasiness threw me into that state of grief, which, to bear up against, required the summons of every degree of fortitude with which the strict religionist is endowed.

“ A consciousness of my own deficiency in this point, led me to believe I could not encounter the test of an event so bitterly afflicting. I shuddered, when I reflected that I had harboured and cherished Charles, with all the tenderness and affection natural from one brother towards another, and that he should have acted a part that would have even staggered the intrepidity of an assassin—was too much—too cruel.—As I meditated deeply on the perfidy of his conduct, brotherly affection seemed to weaken, and I began to think him unworthy of my future notice. Loaded with disgust at the recollection of his vile pursuits—I fell suddenly on my knees to make a vow never more to see him. The sacred oath was on the point of ushering from my bosom in energetic strains—when my mind swiftly recoiled at the rash endeavour;—and the recollection that he was my brother, seemed

to wring so forcibly from my heart—that a suspension of rage ensued—and, at length, an abatement of wrath glowed through my frame, as a mild substitute for the solemn appeal the extreme of anger had nearly urged me to breath forth. I indulged for a while silent contemplation ; but the shock I had sustained proved too violent and penetrating, to suffer me yet to enjoy the blessing of one tranquil moment.—The state of the chest, the plate, and money, crowded fast on my imagination, and overwhelmed me with terror.—I reflected that he could not always commit his depredations beneath a brother's roof, and that others would, doubtless, for such attempts, bring him to serious account, which might terminate in an ignominious end.

“ Oh, Charles ! (I exclaimed, as I traversed the room in agitation, where stood the open chest in evidence of his perpetration) what spirit could have prompted you to this foul act, when an open declaration of necessity would have sufficed to have ensured success to your desires ?

“ But no ; he was too reserved—and, like the guilty man, doubted the verity of the professions of his friends, judging of them by his own duplicity, and suspecting that they, like him, would speak in terms of virtue, but practise secretly the blackest vice.”

This observation of Belford proved him a man of discernment, though his benevolence of soul inclined him to submit to many impositions, and his forgiving temper frequently constituted him a dupe to the artifices of mankind. Certain it is, that men judge of others by themselves : for what can be more natural, than for us to suppose our neighbours capable of committing those acts which we ourselves hesitate not to perform ?—and what would be more natural than for us to imagine they could be guilty of offences that we would shudder at and abhor ?

Thus it is that the innocent, in general, are in this life the greatest sufferers—for, conscious of their own abhorrence of vice, they can have no conception of the tricks practised by the fraudulent—and being,

from an openness and purity of conscience, unarmed, and disqualified to encounter the cheats of the profligate, so as by an early discovery to frustrate his deep laid schemes; they are, from a natural credulity, occasioned by their own sincerity and uprightness, victims, in general, to the greatest impositions.

I may be wrong in my judgment; but a suspicious man, in my opinion, ought never to be trusted. I mean not to infer, by this remark, that men ought to lay themselves open to imposition; and, because they would on no account defraud others of their merchandize, trust their whole stock of wealth into any hands that offered.—A little caution, with a prowling world, is absolutely necessary.

The frequent depredations committed in society afford us proof that frauds are daily practised, which the principles of integrity on our part, incline our nature to recoil at.—It is the individual, only, I wish to screen from our fears and apprehensions, of whom we yet have no reason to be afraid, and

whom we have no right to "suspect would be guilty of those acts which impair the honour and dignity of man.

Collect the world into one great mass, and I will not hesitate to pronounce and consider it a body of corruption;—but introduce the inhabitants of the universe to me individually, and I will receive each with neighbourly love and cordiality, never harbouring, from looks alone, a mistrustful thought of any.

"I traversed the room again," continued Belford, "when a broken pane of glass in the bureau suddenly attracted my wandering eyes, which were now become swollen with grief. The portrait of my mother first occupied my thoughts:—it was there I had deposited it,—and I prized it more than all other possessions: for the tender enjoyment of the original death had long e'er then deprived me of. I flew to seek it in the little drawer, which had for years been rendered invaluable by its possession. Not having the key about me, and anxious for relief from the fears and torturing suspense under

which I laboured, I widened the breach in the glass, which afforded me easier access to the place where my attention was wholly fixed, but which, to my sorrow, soon gave proof that the breach between Charles and myself was likewise greatly extended:—'Twas gone,—and the diamonds, of a peculiar size and brilliancy, which surrounded it, tempted him to this unparalleled act of cruelty.

“ Oh ! my love ! this crowned all my misery :—To be deprived of the resemblance of one, whose parental tenderness, from the earliest period of my life, claimed my warmest affection and veneration,—was too much wretchedness,—too piercing to my afflicted heart, already overcharged with misery and sorrow !

“ I censured the moment the picture was encompassed by such gaudy attire :—I saw too late, with a dejected eye, the folly of adorning an object which needed no decorations to excite the gazer's admiration. Surely the countenance of benignity was enough to charm every beholder,—and such

the skilful painter had justly afforded her, descriptive of herself, a truly pious woman. This additional act of unexemplified barbarity invigorated my grief, and I almost doubted whether my excessive rage would ever be subdued. I viewed Charles now in too despicable a light, to consider him entitled to my future notice :—his atrocious conduct had for a moment suspended my affection, and weaned me from the most distant glimmer of brotherly tenderness. Thus armed against him with disgust, I hurried my steps to command the servants to shut my doors upon him, should he make any attempt to return :—but, as I was on the point of advancing the rigid order, I felt, contrary to my late imagination, that still a faint spark of fraternal affection lingered about my heart, which instantly roused me to tenderness, and overpowered my indignation.

“ I reflected,—I contemplated,—I argued with myself, saying,—’tis true, Charles has treated me with inhumanity unparallelled :—he has robbed me of property, and of that which he knew was most dear to

me :—I cherished him with tenderness,—I relieved him in distress,—I received him in my house, when no other roof would shelter him,—in short, I surrounded him with comforts, when misery and bondage seemed to threaten as his doom.

“ He rewarded these attentions with ingratitude, and even acted the part of a villain :—Still,—still he is my brother ;—and though gloomy and dreary as the present prospect appears, yet,—yet he lives, which spares me the pain of reflecting that hope is sacrificed, and his fate determined. Many men, thus situated, would discard him ;—but this I cannot do ;—for, should he at any future period return and declare himself a penitent, in terms expressive of the utmost sorrow for his misconduct, I could not reject him ;—if I did, I should consider myself accessory to any step of imprudence he might in future take, by leaving him in a situation incapable of supporting himself, which desperate state would urge him to commit other acts of injustice, in order to satisfy the cravings of an exhausting nature. No, I cannot leave him destitute—he is my

brother ;—and though, for the enormity of his crimes, he merits condign punishment, still those acts of vice are past, and future time may furnish him with reflection, and incline him to penitence ;—then, indeed, shall I have reason to rejoice, if, through any attention or countenance on my part, he is led into the path of reformation, which yet may be the case, but which can never be accomplished, should I leave him to the mercy of the world, in those particular hours when he stands most in need of a brother's assistance.

“ To condemn him for his offences, would be at once declaring hostilities against those principles which my instructors ardently strove to imprint upon my heart. As they took pains to sow the seeds of charity within my bosom, it is undubitably my duty to be as ardent in my endeavours to cherish and bring them to perfection,—not from selfish desires alone to derive ensuing benefits, but that I may at a future period, should I be blessed with a family of my own, graft sprigs of the tree I have carefully nurtured upon the hearts of my offspring, who shall

ever gratefully acknowledge the bounteous prize obtained through the piety of their ancestors, and who may as liberally tender branches of the invaluable plant to others, who, with equal caution and perseverance, may be the instruments of establishing groves of rectitude, from one pure seed of mercy and benevolence. These reflections, my love, abated my rage, and inclined me to act with kindness towards Charles, whenever he might afford me the opportunity, by returning and proving his contrition, by adopting a rational line of conduct.

“ I lingered three long months in a state of cruel suspense, anxious to hear of him, and yet fearing lest I might learn, that, through some iniquitous act, he was approaching quickly to an ignominious end. I was, however, soon after this period, relieved from these unhappy conjectures;—for, before the conclusion of another week, I received a letter from him, written on such paper as at once proved the wretchedness of his situation. Poor fellow!—he scarcely knew what to say, to assure me of his sorrow for his guilt;—heinous as I knew

his crimes to be, yet could I not bear to see with what humility he expressed himself.

“ Why, said I to myself, should he be humble to me? I was created but a little before him, and there can surely be no merit in what only was the effect of chance? Oh, my love! judge of my rejoicings when I turned over the leaf of his letter, and learnt that he was within a mile of me?— I forgot all his faults in a moment; my happiness was so great, and my mind so elevated with bliss, in recovering an only brother, and in reflecting I had another chance of restoring him to society, and a life of prudence. I flew to the spot whither the letter directed me, eager to embrace him,— but, on my approach, his appearance impressed me with such a degree of terror, mingled with grief, that my strength for a moment failed, my legs trembled under me, weakened with agitation and horror, and my body, whose pressure proved too potent for the feeble state of its supporters, fell to the ground. Charles approached, apparently equally agitated with myself:—he struggled for utterance,—and some considerable

time elapsed before he could breathe forth an expression :—At length he commenced apologizing,—but I immediately checked him in the attempt.

“ Make no apologies, said I, Charles, for what you could only remedy by one step, and that you have taken. How? he returned,—how have I remedied for all the evils that weigh so heavily upon me?—By returning to your brother, I replied, and seeking comfort under his roof,—which, by an acknowledgement of past errors, you are sure to obtain. Oh Heaven !—he exclaimed, and can you then forgive me? What shall I say, to enforce my thanks and gratitude for such kindness? Nothing, I rejoined, the subject needs no enlargement;—believe me, when I tell you, I freely forgive you ;—a repetition of past imprudencies is needless ;—your business, now, is to retrieve your character by an amendment of life, strictly pursuing a virtuous course, to which you have hitherto been a stranger.

“ This, my love, proved the chief of our conversation, on the spot where we met.

“Immediately on recovering my strength, I raised myself from the ground, and having embraced Charles with my usual affection, which he received with a flood of tears gushing from his eyes, we bent our course towards home.

The severe shock my mind had received in viewing him in so wretched a condition, checked the progress of my footsteps, and I found considerable difficulty in proceeding on the way. I could scarcely believe, that within so short a period of time, an alteration so material could have been made—but too pointedly the possibility was proved. When he departed from this peaceful place, he could boast of health, and was, as you may imagine, equipped like a gentleman. He appeared now, ragged from head to foot, and even about his neck hung an old stocking as a substitute for a neck-cloth. His face, which before had borne the aspect of gaiety, was now reduced to a pale and dejected cast. In short, his figure altogether was such as must have excited the commiseration of every person that be-

held him, whose bosom was not a stranger to the feelings of humanity.

“ I pitied him sincerely from my heart—and thought, from these observations, the distress he must have encountered was a sufficient punishment for his follies.—I determined, therefore, within myself, not to rebuke him, but to treat him with all the attention and kindness in my power.

“ My determination on this point was not made solely on account of the troubles he had encountered ;—but from a hope that tender treatment would prove a successful effort towards his reformation.”

This admirable idea of Belford's shone in testimony of his unbounded benevolence, in the same moment that it proved him a man possessed of great wisdom : for what can be more unjustifiable, cruel, and even bratish, than for us, when we attempt to shelter frail relatives from impending ruin, to adopt the plan of constantly upbraiding them for their past faults and follies ?—Yet, alas ! I much fear this uncharitable method

of reforming, is but too frequently practised. 'Tis a pity we cannot all discern the danger of such a proceeding, as well as the injustice.—I shall, however, make an attempt to point out both.

When a man receives a frail relation into his house, who comes to implore forgiveness under the influence of penitence, and takes various opportunities of chiding him for offences, which, being passed, can never be recalled; he pursues the very system to frustrate every good design, and even involves the unhappy person in miseries still greater than before;—for, by constantly jarring in his ears repetitions of his late misconduct, which, in his penitential hours, he reflects on with horror, he at length feels insulted and deeply disgraced; and, conceiving it impossible to reside happily under a roof where his late imprudencies are as much talked of, as if he continued daily committing every species of depredation and fraud; he flies disgusted from the uncharitable mansion, where his ears witnessed nothing but reproaches, to take his chance in a wide extended world of iniqui-

ty, whose inhabitants could not treat him harder, or render his life more irksome; and, thus determined never to return, he plunges into an irrecoverable state of wretchedness.—Oh! cruel sacrifice this!—with what guilt do we not load ourselves for such barbarity!

If we would but, on these important occasions, devote a little of our time to religious reflection, we should at once discern that a faulty relative, who returns to us with an heart inspired with penitence, is more deserving of our attention, than if he had never given us cause to be offended; and, instead of reproaching him with a recollection of what he now despises himself for, we should take every delicate precaution to dispel from his mind a remembrance of such horrors, and by every effort of kindness and attention, we should incline him to believe he had gained that confidence to which a penitent is ever entitled. Thus happily reinstated in the esteem of his friends, he would experience too much bliss in having embraced a virtuous course of life, to feel inclined ever to pursue those plans again,

which might tend to blemish or impair his character. When such happy effects can be produced by a simple act of kindness,—what a pity it is, we are not all sufficiently aware of our duty, to be as ready on every occasion to shew mercy, as to receive it.

“ When newly apparelled,” continued Belford, “ I was happy in again embracing a brother, whose appearance was now only altered by a dejected and pale visage, which however, with a little attention, was soon restored to its former vivacity and healthful look. His behaviour now, marked with propriety and correctness, flattered me with great hopes he would in future adopt a rational system ; and, notwithstanding the impression his late conduct had made on my mind, yet, when he declared himself contrite, and seemed to act in conformity to his professions, I could not suffer myself to doubt him. He afforded me one striking proof that he was not totally destitute of feeling, though very deficient:—He returned me the portrait of my mother, which he had stripped of its diamonds, but which he had carefully reserved, with an intention of send-

ing by some opportunity, from a recollection of my attachment to it.

“ I received it, my love, as you may well imagine, with tears expressive of the summit of joy :—it shone with more brilliancy before me in its humble state, than ever it had when surrounded by all its late splendid ornaments. Like a sincere and much loved bosom friend, saved from the flames of a consuming mansion, I embraced it with redoubled ardour, viewing all its beauties which crouded fast on my imagination, and filled my heart with that extreme of bliss, which is diffused in the mind by a recollection of parental tenderness, which never fails to inspire filial affection.

“ I gazed on the restored object, as often as I was able, but it was frequently obscured from my sight by floods of tears which streamed from my eyes, and left a watery cloud before me. In haste I wiped away the dewy shade, and every prospect of the portrait invigorated my spirits, and served as a comforting balm to heal the wounds of a once dejected mind. Thus I recovered

the resemblance of my lost parent, the possession of which I am still happy enough to boast of, and which I trust will never more by any artifice be torn from me.

“ My anxiety now was to learn, what affliction Charles had experienced during his absence ; but I would not venture to urge the question, till he was restored to health ; as the recollection of his misfortunes might have depressed his spirits, and prolonged his indisposition. At length, finding him sufficiently recovered, I entreated him to relate all that had occurred, assuring him, nothing would waver my affection, and that curiosity, connected with my interest in his welfare, prompted me to make the enquiry.—His narrative proved not tedious, though in every degree affecting.—He informed me, that, on his departure from Munster, he hired a chaise, and bent his course immediately towards London, never delaying but for a necessary change of horses, and occasional refreshment.

“ As soon as he reached the metropolis, he repaired to the house of a goldsmith, and disposed of the plate and jewels then in his

possession, which, with the money his pockets contained, furnished him with the sum of two hundred and forty pounds.

“ With this he repaired, at an hour when all rational beings were reposing, to a gaming house in St James’s Street, which he yet knew only by report, but where it seemed his mind had been unfortunately long directed. As he hastened his steps through the streets that directed him towards this edifice of iniquity, a thousand transient pictures of imaginary approaching wealth, ran on his mind, and hurried him into the flames, to be the instrument of his own destruction.

“ Ah Charles ! I exclaimed, fancy me not capable of imposing on your liberality, for obliging me with so candid a confession ; but I cannot help observing, that in general there is but one way of terminating life, for those who pursue a system so depraved, and so unjustifiable.

“ His hopes were soon destroyed, and the pile of riches which imagination had built on his mind, exceeding in height the pre-

sumptuous structure, raised by the Babylonian tribe, when their desire to pry into celestial secrets, withheld from mortal knowledge, urged them to prophane attempts, meriting the wrath of Heaven, suddenly fell to the foundation ; and, like every effort which extends beyond the limits of justice, soon was consumed by its own materials : For, within three hours, the whole of his ill-gained property forsook him, and left him destitute and penniless.

“ The landlord, with apparent kindness, and a degree of courtesy familiar to men of his profession, begged leave to conduct him to the supper room, hoping, by this attention and civility, to insinuate himself in his good graces, in order to ensure his future custom : But Charles was too deeply involved in grief, to feel any inclination to partake of the repast he had so dearly earned : He hurried from the despicable mansion, within whose doors many a light heart had entered, but out of which many a heavy one came,—and, wandering through the streets, in a state bordering on distraction, he endeavoured to trace out some plan to

reimburse himself. Fortunately for him, he adopted a scheme that in all probability saved him from an ignominious end ; for, by the step he took, he constituted his appearance so contemptible, as to render it impossible for him to attempt, by any art, to negotiate with persons of respectability, as none would credit him, who for a moment viewed the wretchedness of his situation. Had he supported the aspect of a gentleman, he might again, perhaps, have imposed on the unwary and credulous. These reflections, however, never occurred to his mind ; and, like a man deeply plunged in guilt, he set a trap, and was the first ensnared in it.

“ Having pondered a considerable time on the misery of his condition, he strolled from street to street in search of a house, where he might vend or purchase ready made apparel.

“ Such a place as this he at length discovered in an obscure quarter of the town, —and though the latest hour usual for negotiating business had been long since past,

yet the landlord, who answered his knock at the door from his bed-room window, soon obliged him with admission, when he learnt the cause of his untimely visit, not doubting but he should be amply rewarded for any trouble he might incur on the occasion. As his plan was now to muster together all the cash he could become master of, to make, what he termed, one grand push, he disposed of the clothes he had on, for the sum of three guineas, one of which he returned for the payment of a ragged dress with which he equipped himself.

“ Thus disgraced, he sallied forth in search of new horrors ;—and, though the cravings of nature reminded him that many hours had elapsed since he received any nutriment, yet his mind was so bent towards one scene of destruction, that he would not bestow as much of his pittance for his own support, as would have been adequate to the value of a morsel of bread.

“ Again he hurried his steps towards that labyrinth of iniquity, that flattering edifice of wretchedness, the gaming-house ;—but,

on approaching the spot, a thought suddenly occurred, that at once impeded his progress, and, to his sorrow, frustrated his design.

“ As he contemplated on the magnificence of the mansion then before him, he saw immediately the impropriety of his attempting to enter such a house, in a habit scarcely superior to that of a common beggar. He paused—when, surveying himself, and then, casting another wishful look on the odious house of ruin, he felt convinced, that, within the unhospitable walls of such a structure, he would have been considered but an unwelcomed guest. This disappointing reflection brought him to tears ;—and, turning suddenly from the mansion of his misfortune, he strolled, he knew not which way, nearly constituted a victim to despair.

“ At length recovering, in some degree, from this new made misery, he employed himself in studying some other method to risk his pittance of money, for the chance of profit.—A very little study is necessary,

if we are bent on our own ruin ; and so it proved with Charles :—for, after a short consideration, he began to fancy there were other houses inferior to that which he had lately visited, where similar robberies were committed, and whose proprietors were not above admitting as a customer one of his mean appearance.

“ Flattered with this new idea, he questioned the first man he met, who, happening to be one of the sable hearted tribe, who had drained many a poor man’s pocket, soon conducted him to a place where the difference of one half hour rendered him literally destitute and penniless.—Poor fellow ! it even grieves me now, when I reflect on the miseries he must have encountered. He then solicited the people of the house to lend him one shilling to pay for his night’s lodging : but they abruptly answered him in the negative ; and as he renewed his entreaties, declaring he had no friends to fly to for succour, they turned him instantly out of doors, one of the iron hearted gang at the same time exclaiming, “ Go to

those who are friends to the poor ; we have no call for needy people here."

" Poor Charles thought by his lamentations to excite their pity, but his confession of indigence only roused their indignation. — Had he been aware that he petitioned a race, whose profession it was to be merciless, he might have spared himself much pains, and have escaped being insulted and exposed."

" Unfortunate creature !" exclaimed the patient wife of Belford, " how could he be so imprudent ?"

" Ah, my love !" returned Belford, sighing, " I would this had been all the imprudence I could accuse him of."

" He was compelled to wander the remainder of the night from street to street, and, I doubt not, but in those hours of solitary reflection, his conscience must have stung him to the soul. He had now no means of existing but by begging, which he continued with sufficient success, to defray his

expences down to this place, which, after much difficulty and delay, he accomplished, by making the journey on foot.

“ This was the account he gave me of the occurrences during his absence ; and, as it contained nothing that reflected any credit to himself, I felt no inclination to doubt the truth of his assertions.—Oh ! that this were all I could report against him ; but, a little more patience, and I will inform you how he treated me at last.”

“ Oh, Heaven !” exclaimed the lovely Mrs Belford, “ and could he, after all this, treat you unkindly ?”

“ Ah ! too unkindly, too cruelly,” returned Belford : “ the manner in which he rewarded me for the pains I took in seeking to make him happy, was barbarous in the extreme,—it was unparalleled.—He continued with me six months after his return ; and the uniform decorum with which he conducted himself during that period, furnished me with great hopes that he reflected on his past vices with horror, and that

he clearly discerned the secret blessings which a pure conscience inspires. I confess, I felt at times timid, as he had once before deceived me ; but whenever I reflected on his restoring the portrait of my mother, because he knew I prized it, I could not but believe a spark of humanity still lingered about his heart, which I frequently hoped and trusted would some time or other kindle a powerful flame of virtue in his bosom, that would erase and annihilate every unjust and disgraceful sentiment.—But, alas ! he deprived me at length of this flattering hope for a time. In the beginning of the seventh month, he rose on a certain morning as before, and having again robbed the same chest of of some new plate that had been deposited in it,—he precipitately left the house.

“ This cruel event drove me nearly to distraction : I made a diligent search after him, but he could no where be found.—I feared I should never have recovered the shock. My rage now, encreased to a higher pitch, if possible, than when he before deceived me. I again flew to command the

servants to shut my doors against him should he attempt to return, when I discovered fraternal affection was not yet erased from my bosom. The same degree of weakness that before checked me in this rash endeavour, trembled again over my frame and sunk me to reflection ; when, after seriously meditating, I found it impossible to brook the thought of shunning him for ever. It is true nothing but the most contrite penitence can save him ; but as the most vitiated inhabitant of this mortal globe has the power of reforming, I will not discard him, but, should he ever return, my arms shall be extended to receive him ; and I trust I may yet be the chief instrument of restoring him to reason, and society. Heaven knows where he is, how he lives, or, cruel doubt ! whether he stills exists.

“ It is now four years since he abandoned this peaceful habitation, and I have never received any intelligence of him since his departure. I will not however indulge despair ; as well as being a vice, it plunges into misery those who encourage it. Hope is a pleasing virtue, which softens pain, heals

the afflicted heart, and leads it to happiness."

Oh my soul! exclaimed Mrs. Belford, whose eyes streamed with tears as she spoke, what cruel tortures you have sustained, Oh! that heaven had permitted me to have shared in all your afflictions.

The account you have given me of your unhappy brother has indeed cast a temporary dejection on my spirits; but I will exert myself for your sake to dispel every unpleasant reflection. I sincerely unite with you in pity for poor Charles, and entertain an equal hope that he will yet return and seek refuge under the tranquil roof of Munster Abbey. Believe me, I should delight in assisting you, by every tender effort, to lead him into virtue's amiable paths, where all her votaries are established in peace and happiness.

Belford embraced his beloved partner, enchanted more than ever at the tenderness of her benevolent mind.

The ancient clock of Munster's church struck the hour of eight ; and as the dew of Heaven moistened the earth with a chilling damp, they returned from the garden, and soon after retired for the night, in the hope of experiencing a tranquil repose.



The summit of Mount Ash is reached the hour of eight; and as the day is
bright, the view of the country is
very fine. The country is very fertile and
the people are very industrious. The
mountain is very high and the view
is very fine. The people are very
industrious and the country is very
fertile.





MUNSTER ABBEY.

CHAP. V.

MR and Mrs Belford continued to enjoy a state of bliss ; and as each day passed over their heads, new sensations of happiness rewarded their virtuous exertions. Whilst she was employed in innocent domestic pursuits, he was arduous in his endeavours to relieve those objects of pity, whose penury entitled them to the assistance of the wealthy.

Independent of the many services he rendered in various parts of the country, he reserved a certain sum regularly out of his income annually, for the purpose of softening the distresses of those whom he conceived laboured under a load of oppression. One year perhaps he would distribute this little

property amongst the unfortunate widows of those brave men who had lost their lives in the service of their country :—Another, he would expend it in the purchase of fuel,—which he would retail impartially to the shivering poor, when an inclement season rendered that article scarce and expensive,—the want of which is bitterly distressing to those whose property is insufficient to afford them many comforts. Then again he would assist individuals amongst his neighbours,—who, through unforeseen misfortunes, had failed in their pursuits,—and, where their necessities did not extend beyond the power of his purse to alleviate,—he would frequently re-instate and establish them in a prosperous line of traffic.

Belford was peculiarly attentive to the distresses of all who came within his reach :—his tender heart commiserated for their troubles ;—and his hand was ever prepared to be liberally extended,—in obedience to the virtuous commands of his benevolent disposition. As a good man himself,—he was naturally attached to moral characters,

—but his services were not reserved for the sole benefit of this description of persons. Mercy ever proved a striking feature in his character,—which entitled him to the appellation of a truly charitable man ;—consequently, those who bore not the best name, did not escape his notice, when misery infested their bosoms,—and cast a gloom upon their dwellings ;—and to despise, was an idea far beyond his conception. His sentiments were too liberal to incline him to fancy every man a villain,—whose character would not bear the strictest scrutiny. Indeed he differed in opinion, on this point, from the generality of mankind :—For, instead of shunning those whose misconduct entitled them to censure, he considered it the duty of the powerful and opulent, to pay the strictest attention to persons labouring under such misfortune,—by endeavouring to strike out some rational method to restore them to reason,—and hurry them from the jaws of impending destruction. He frequently observed, that, by discarding and treating contemptuously such unfortunate beings,—we adopt the very means to involve them

deeper in affliction,—which, on our part, is acting in opposition to those principles which Christianity is intended to diffuse in our minds.

Belford made various allowances for distress,—and never considered the character of any man so desperate as represented.

The world, he justly observed, bent in general towards censure,—and, by the time an unfavourable tale had been three times related,—it was frequently doubled in the enormity of its vice,—and so on in proportion,—until the unhappy victim, first accused of some trifling frailty, was by the tongue of man condemned as one of the most detestable characters in existence.

“It is true,” said he, as he contemplated on the sufferings of the indigent, “that vice is odious,—and the guilty deserve punishment;—but before we are biassed to exercise severity;—we should cautiously weigh all circumstances, and make such allowances

as are reasonable, from the nature of the distresses of the party accused.

“ For instance, to commit a theft, is both an unjust and a disgraceful act ;—but shall a man, who is destitute of every support,—even so destitute as to be at a loss where to procure the next morsel of bread,—having failed of success in begging,—shall he, for taking a crust from a shelf, (unobserved as he imagines) to satisfy the painful wants which hunger has occasioned him to suffer in lingering torments,—be classed among a banditti of common thieves, who wantonly plunder, to heighten and encourage their scenes of dissipation? and shall he be considered as one meriting the punishment they deserve?—No :—Nature must be supported. It is possible a man may be thus situated from unforeseen misfortune,—without being entitled to the appellation of a criminal ;—and a state so truly deplorable, instead of being a disgrace to him,—is one of the most serious reflections on those who surround him ; as it proves them deficient in those principles which ought to be the boast and

pride of all nations." Such were the ideas of this truly worthy character on this head, whose bliss was crowned in being united to one who cherished similar principles; for such were also the tender sentiments of the amiable Mrs Belford.

In addition to the many delights this happy couple experienced in their little paradise, they were, at the close of the first year after their union, blessed with a lovely daughter, whose countenance at once bespoke her the offspring of so amiable a pair.

This joyous event tended immediately to illustrate those virtues possessed by Belford and his partner, characteristic in each, of the tender parent. A new species of affection now occupied a space within their bosom,—and the glow of parental love, decked with additional graces their accustomed smiles of benignity.

The promising infant, our fair heroine, received by the sacred rite of baptism the name of Aurelia. She proved their only child;—and as she advanced in years, so did her mind

strengthen in those virtues which her parents ardently endeavoured to impress her with a love of. The greatest pains were bestowed on her education ; her mind was never indebted to a seminary for cultivation ; proper masters having been appointed to afford her necessary instructions at home. She was ever indulged in a knowledge of those pleasing arts which seemed most to attract her attention. At a very early age she discovered a peculiar attachment to music ;—a science which never fails to display innumerable graces and beauties in the mind of a benevolent person, but which but ill accords with a morose or unfeeling disposition. ~

Music hath various powers. In joy it will invigorate felicity, and in trouble it will increase melancholy.—To the ears of a tyrant, its sweetest note proves the most jarring,—and very natural this effect ; for in no instance did discord and harmony ever amicably unite ; while but a simple chord of its enchantment fills the compassionate mind with many pleasureable sensations.

Even in pain a kind of pleasure is experienced, in the melancholy it creates ; else why would we so often court repetitions of a favourite air, which pleased our once loved, though now departed friend ? It is the perfect recollection it affords us of past joys, that awakens us to court similar sounds to those which our ears witnessed in the moments of felicity ; and our tears are enticed by reflecting on the impossibility of such pleasures ever more returning ; but still we are ambitious to indulge the melancholy, because it draws the picture of past delights, with the nicest accuracy, to the imagination.

In this desirable and interesting art, the lovely Aurelia excelled :—She frequently gratified the ears of her parents with soft airs on the piano-forte, accompanied by a pleasing voice, gifted to her by Nature. How often she pathetically exclaimed, when a tear of sensibility started from her beautiful eye, “ Oh, my dear father, when I hear sweet music, it makes me think of Heaven, and inspires me with a thousand

desires, beyond my abilities, to establish the world in happiness."

Ah! little thought the amiable Aurelia, in these her juvenile days, when she so ardently hoped to view all Nature in a state of bliss,—and when she would have decked the countenance of every inhabitant of the universe with a descriptive smile of serenity and joy, had her power been adequate to her ambition,—that she had to combat against various snares that would be laid against her, by a corrupt race, who, in return for her pure wishes, would endeavour to devise means to seek her destruction :—but, too true, the treacherous requital was offered, though happily without success. Her mind was artless in the extreme :—She acknowledged the many blessings bestowed on her by Providence, by a just sense of gratitude, connected with her continued exertions in the fair and unpolluted path of virtue. She never discovered anxiety or depression, but when the sufferings of others claimed her, commiseration. The expression of her countenance described her internal emotions. When she smiled, there was

some true cause for her apparent approbation; and, when an air of gravity gave a check to her vivacity, there were substantial reasons for her discomposure.

In short, at a very early period of life, she promised fairly for approaching as near to perfection as human nature could aspire.

To what extremes of bliss were the hearts of Belford and his beloved wife elevated, when they contemplated on the flattering prospect of long continued happiness, which their amiable Aurelia afforded them reason to hope for. Their felicity, when they viewed their affectionate daughter, and reflected on her merits, could scarcely be equalled. In her was deposited their chief hope of comfort;--nor were they disappointed in their anticipation.



MUNSTER ABBEY.

CHAP. VI.

TRANQUILITY continued to deck the happy village of Munster, and, for the space of fifteen years, the frowns of fortune were unknown beneath the Abbey's hospitable roof. Not a circumstance occurred during this period to damp the pleasures of the scene, except the decease of poor Munster the dog, the remembrance of whose faithful services called a tear of gratitude from the eye of those whose happiness he had been the means of prolonging.

The worldling would have spurned at the idea of descending so low, or displaying such weakness, as he would have termed it, to shed tears for a dog,—a mere brute!—yet, would he not have felt too proud, in any

state of peril, to have accepted the services and assistance of the same animal.

How descriptive is this observation of men of the world, who cringe to any thing that will render them a service in the time of necessity,—and yet the moment every prospect of danger is dispelled, they shun those who relieved them, (if they are not equal in rank and fortune with themselves,) with as much precaution, as if, instead of having rescued them from impending ruin, they had endeavoured by various projects to accomplish their assassination.

The family of Belford were differently instructed, and differently inclined :—If they received a favour, they were grateful enough to remember it ; and if they professed a friendship in one place, they were never above acknowledging it in another.

Aurelia was now advanced to an age, when thoughts of a more important nature might be expected to occupy her mind, than had hitherto attracted her attention. She was of a middling stature, and her ex-

quisite beauty, combined with an open countenance indicative of an heart of benevolence, created general admiration. Simplicity was a distinguishing feature in her character, and candour marked all her actions. The summit of her happiness was in seeing others chearful, nor did she at this time appear to have formed any ideas of bliss, beyond the enviable joys experienced in domestic retirement. One of her chief delights was in strolling towards the close of day on the refreshing banks of the Ex, and surveying the beauties of the country around her, which nature had liberally enriched with a luxuriant tint. She generally pursued the same walk, seldom varying her course. Her mind was not inclined to many changes; those objects that had once afforded her pleasure, she was grateful enough again to court, without seeking others to outvie them.

In one of these pensive strolls, whilst her mind was employed in drawing comparisons between a busy world of dissipation, with which she was acquainted only from description, and a retired country life, which experience since her birth had inclined her to

hope for a continuance of; her tranquillity was suddenly intruded on by a sound which induced her to look with astonishment towards the quarter whence the noise proceeded, when to her surprise she observed a horse approaching in full speed, bearing a man whose signals of agitation convinced her he was in imminent danger.

Aurelia's emotions were scarcely to be described: Her heart palpitated with fear, and, but for the support of a tree against which she leaned, she would have sunk to the ground. A dismal groan urged her to look again:—reluctantly with fear she cast her bewildered eyes towards the same quarter, when she perceived the horse standing within a few yards of her, but the man she had just before seen was no longer a burthen to him.

She listened attentively for some moments, hoping her ears might witness another groan, which, though doleful and piercing to her heart, she considered in some degree gratifying, as it would prove the unfortunate stranger had not from the unhappy

event been hurried from existence to encounter the difficulty which an unprepared soul necessarily must, to secure in another world a permanent seat of repose. Her patience at length exhausted, and her anxiety to know the fate of the stranger increasing, she hurried her steps towards the place whence she conceived the lamentable cry had issued.

Grief and horror would have overwhelmed her, but for the cheering sensations which hope inspired, that she had the chance and probably the power of alleviating the miseries of another, the flattering expectation of which supported her through the trying scene. The distance of a few yards presented to her eyes the body of a man weltering in blood.

“ Oh Heaven !” exclaimed Aurelia, as she fell on her knees, “ I cannot support this scene of wretchedness,—despair will predominate over my exertions. Ha !” she exclaimed again, more wretched than before, what have I rashly said ? have I perfidiously flown into the face of Heaven, and

for a moment encouraged a vice so pernicious as despair? a vice which has cost my parents years of labour to urge me to excrete!—Oh! what ingratitude have I discovered!—forbid it, that same heaven which I have so grossly offended, that I should ever again fall into an error so detrimental to the human mind,—and let my fortitude, in the present scene of misery, compensate for the guilt I have brought upon my head.”

The body still continued in a state of insensibility; and, as she renewed her gaze on it, fresh horrors trembled through her tender frame. At length, fearing the fatal effects of delay, she determined to offer such assistance as she conceived might be of service should the current of life not have ceased to flow:—Accordingly she approached the helpless object, and, taking a bottle of salts from her pocket, applied it to his relief; at the same time, with her handkerchief wiping the blood from his face, to discover, if possible, who the victim to so dreadful a disaster might be, she recognised the visage of a young man, but could not trace

the semblance of any person with whom she was acquainted, or whom she had ever before seen.

She continued to persevere in her application of the salts, petitioning Heaven to direct some chance friend to the spot, who might be more competent to the task of affording relief, in such a case, than she, who had never before witnessed a scene so melancholy and awful. "Alas!" sighed the amiable fair, as she cast an affecting glance on her lovely hand, now deeply crimsoned with human blood, "how different must be the sensations of the assassin, who, by his tempered steel, promotes the flow of reddened streams of horror, to those which I experience, who, thus busily employed, am seeking to create an ebb of an untimely current."

In the midst of these reflections, she looked around her, hoping to hear the footsteps of some wandering peasant, who might be regaling in a tranquil walk, after the fatigues of a day's labour, exploring the innumerable beauties which Nature affords.

for observation :—but all was silent :—night was hurrying on apace :—but a faint glimmer of twilight remained ;—and, as she renewed her look around the country, and explored the solemnity of the scene, to which she was a solitary witness, her heart chilled with indescribable sensations, which the gloomy disaster had cast upon her mind. She now encouraged meditation, and began to reflect on the anxiety her parents must labour under to discover the cause of her long absence from home, as she had never before continued her walks to so late an hour. She would have hastened to the Abbey to their relief,—but when she cast her eyes on the piteous object before her,—she could not brook the thoughts of leaving it to chance,—while there was a possibility of her presence rendering a service, which a moment's neglect, at so critical a period, would probably render useless and unnecessary. From these reflections, she resolved to run every risk,—and persevere in every tender endeavour to restore the unhappy man to life,—when again wiping from his face the blood that had issued from his wounds,—to her inexpressible joy

she discovered symptoms favouring his restoration.

He breathed,—and from his heart ushered forth a languid sigh,—descriptive of the feeble state to which he was reduced.

“Blessed be the Omnipotent,” exclaimed Aurelia, in a rapturous tone of voice, “whose ears have been open to my supplications,—and, blessed be the path for ever, that favoured my footsteps to be a witness of this once mournful scene.”

The light of day, from the lateness of the hour, being extinguished,—she could only view the body at particular periods, favoured by the beams of the moon,—which had risen above the summit of the hills,—but which was frequently obscured by clouds that passed over, and eclipsed it from terrestrial observation. The languid stranger, in this interval of suspense, gained new strength,—and, after innumerable entreaties, from the tender tongue of Aurelia, to speak,—he at length, in an accent

that proved him a native of some foreign shore,—expressed a wish to obtain water.

Aurelia, possessed of a lively apprehension,—and ambitious to promote the stranger's recovery,—immediately recollected having seen the village boys, when overpowered by thirst in sultry seasons, dip their hats in the rivers, and enjoy the refreshing draught with glee descriptive of the summit of luxury,—she determined in consequence to make use of a similar vessel,—there being nothing more commodious within her immediate reach.—Accordingly, having repeated several times to the stranger assurances that his wants should be immediately supplied,—she hastened to the banks of the Ex,—and, procuring as much water as she conceived necessary,—returned with it as expeditiously as possible,—and, shortly after, having cautiously administered it,—to her great joy he gained sufficient strength to make many replies, and to give hopes that no serious consequences would ensue from the disaster.

His first observation, after recovering the power of articulation,—was to express his intention of rewarding whoever it might be that seemed so humanely to assist him in his helpless moments of misery ;—a thought uppermost in the minds of those who move in the higher spheres of life, who, from being habituated to a corrupt and dissipated circle,—seldom witness acts bearing the semblance of humanity,—unless previously purchased through the medium of pecuniary interest :—But the lovely Aurelia, who was purity itself,—exclaimed, with tears streaming from her eyes, expressive of her gratitude to heaven.—“ Alas ! good sir ! I have been some time rewarded for the trifling attention I have shewn you on this occasion, rewarded even beyond my most sanguine expectations.” “ How ? ” replied the stranger, with an air of surprise, “ how are you rewarded for all you have done for me ; you have yet received no money.”

“ Money ! ” returned Aurelia, with a significant smile, and shaking her head, “ Ha ! that is but a paltry recompense to a compassionate mind, even when the possession

of it is much needed ; it is the secret gratification the heart experiences in performing an act of benevolence, that proves the grand reward, and the return of pleasure, for having alleviated another's pain, never fails to more than compensate for any trouble that may be incurred in a case of distress." " Indeed !" rejoined the astonished stranger, " I am a Frenchman, and have never yet made this discovery !" " Perhaps," returned Aurelia, who possessed too much delicacy to feel inclined to offer any unfavourable reflections on the foreigner's remark, though she felt greatly disgusted to find him a stranger to the common principles of humanity : " You have never in your own country, sir, witnessed any scenes of distress, that called for the assistance of those who had the power of relieving pain, otherwise you would doubtless have discovered many anxious to stand forward, and tender their services.—I can judge only of your nation from an opinion I have been instructed to form of mankind in general ; which is, that some benevolent characters inhabit every quarter of the world ;—that it is not the nation that contaminates an indivi-

dual, but the principles which are imbibed and cherished from the earliest period of life.—Of England I can speak from experience, having witnessed many humane acts which stamp the British nation with the fame of charity.—For my own part, however, I confess myself incompetent to the task of representing the virtues of my country :—In me you view but an humble individual, who can boast of no action that can afford any claim to merit ;—the simple duties natural to our desires in favour of our fellows who are helpless, are all that I have ever exercised, and who could be so depraved as to witness a scene of distress without exerting their interest to dispel the misery, and alleviate the sufferer.” “ Oh ! most exquisite young lady !” returned the foreigner, “ Your sentiments bespeak you the offspring of elevated parents : forgive me for having abruptly offered so gross a return for your tender and invaluable services : it was the darkness of the night, combined with the feeble state to which I was reduced, that deceived me.”

At this moment the only cloud that was observed floating beneath the heavens, passed from before the face of the moon, which instantly illuminated the earth, and decked the groves around with silver hue.

“ Alas ! indeed, young lady,” continued the foreigner, as he gazed on Aurelia’s lovely and benignant countenance, “ I have been grossly deceived ; for, by the light which heaven hath granted for our use, I now discern a face descriptive of the sentiments which have been so gratifying to my ears, and a figure corresponding with a person of exalted birth ; may I presume to ask whether you reside near this place ?”—“ Within the distance of a mile,” replied Aurelia, “ my father’s habitation is situated, whither I shall be happy to conduct you, as soon as you have sufficiently recovered from the shock sustained by your fall, to feel adequate to the task of proceeding so far.—I would instantly repair to seek readier assistance that might spare you the trouble of journeying on foot, but that I am unwilling to leave you in the dead of

night, in so solitary a place, lest some other accident unforeseen may befall you."

" Oh ! Angel that thou must be," rejoined the foreigner, " your goodness exceeds all I have ever witnessed.—Your observation is as just as it is charitable ; for I am astonished that we have so long remained in this place unmolested by any banditti, and unarmed as we are.—I feel much uneasiness on your account, as from the tenderness of your sex you are less calculated to encounter the insults of such a set of men than I, whose profession it is to oppose the enemy."

" Banditti !" returned Aurelia, with an air denoting the utmost surprise ; " we are infested with no banditti here !—A robbery is an event we seldom hear of, and as for murder, I should as soon expect to see the sun rise in the west, and set in the east, as to be informed of any thing so dreadful.—An attack of a stray dog, or an unfortunate blow from the foot of your own horse, that must be wandering near this place, and might chance to stumble on you, are the

extent of my apprehensions.—Our conduct in these parts renders it impossible for us to be in fear of any banditti whatever.—The business of the poor with us is to work for the rich; and the wealthy have ever been ready to prove their gratitude towards their inferiors, for the comforts they have enjoyed from their hands, by protecting them in the moments of danger, and relieving them in the hours of necessity.—When this is the system we adopt, from what quarter can we expect a banditti to subvert our tranquillity?” “Oh! from none indeed, sweet lady,” rejoined the foreigner, “where justice and benevolence are so universally espoused.—The favourable account you have given me of your country has elated my heart with the extreme of admiration,—and the safety in which we have remained since I was thrown on this spot, affords a strong proof of the verity of your assertion.—I confess to you I am enchanted at being a witness to so much benevolence, and am happy, as a token of my gratitude, to acknowledge, that I consider myself, for the first time since my creation, situated in a terrestrial Paradise, and you are the Angel

that has guarded me from the snares of death.—It would have proved a circumstance truly flattering to myself, could I have witnessed a scene of such charity in the country that gave me birth ; but I am sufficiently rewarded for any accident that has befallen me, or any difficulty I may hereafter encounter in my travels, in having discovered, on a foreign coast, virtues which do honour to mankind, and which no other nation in the universe can emulate.”

Aurelia and the stranger continued in conversation, while the Abbey of Munster was thrown into the utmost consternation at her long absence.

A thousand conjectures were formed respecting her fate :—one moment, it was feared she had fallen into the river ;—another, that indisposition had deprived her of the power of returning. Every new thought tended but to paint horror on the imagination, in robes more gloomy than before, till at length Belford, nearly frantic with innumerable apprehensions, determined to sally forth in search of her. It was pain-

ful to him to leave his beloved wife in a state little short of insanity ; but the call was too importunate to be dispensed with. —He desired the house-keeper to remain with her, and endeavour to cheer her spirit ; when, after encountering some difficulty in quitting the room, though urged by the disconsolate Mrs Belford not to lose a moment,—he hurried from the Abbey, and pursued the steps of Aurelia's favourite walk.

“ Alas !” he exclaimed in a disconsolate tone, as he hurried over the rustling grass newly moistened by the chilling dew, “ if I have lost my poor Aurelia, my days may easily be numbered.—Aurelia,—Aurelia,” he cried in an elevated, yet tremulous voice, as he lengthened his course, “ if thine ears can witness the lamentable supplications of thy wretched father, speak, that his heart may be relieved from its oppression, by the cheering music of thy tender tongue.” Here he paused to listen with attention, but the stillness of the night was only disturbed at intervals by the gentle wafting of the breeze that whistled through the groves. The

fleecy lambs no more were heard to bleat ; the feathered throng were likewise lulled to rest ; not even did the unsocial owl intrude upon the awful silence by his uncouth screech. The charms of nature were for a while suspended, and all but Belford seemed to repose in the peaceful bosom of sleep.

“ Ah me ! ” he cried pathetically, as he cast his eyes towards the Heavens, “ Alas ! pale moon ! I fear Aurelia’s loss will for the future place me under thy influence and direction, for lunacy must doubtless prove my wretched fate,—the loss of her is more than I can bear.”

“ I pray you, sir, lean on my arm,” said Aurelia, in a supplicating voice, in this instant to the stranger, who was situated near the spot where Belford was ruminating on his miseries, “ I beseech you to consider me as your servant, for I will exert myself to support you through this difficulty.”

“ Ha ! what do I hear ! said Belford faltering,—“ my senses surely are already impaired ! for I heard the voice of Aurelia

breathe forth expressions in the strain of love!—and the sounds must certainly have been the effect of wild imagination!—yet they were very plain, and I feel that I yet know myself,—let me attend again!”

“ Indeed, Sir, ’twill be better for you,” she rejoined, “ permit me to conduct you for the present to a more retired spot, where not even the chilling breeze of night can offend or discompose you.”

“ Oh! merciful Heaven,” sighed Belford in a languid tone, “ it is indeed her voice. Her expressions have confounded me, and I am more wretched than ever. The anguish which her dissolution would have created within my bosom, would have proved sensations of delight in comparison to what I now experience. Alas! I never thought she could have thus deceived me;—but her tongue gives proof of her perfidiousness, and what clearer testimony need I look for.—Oh! it must be so,—Ah! my once loved daughter, who from the cradle I reared with the fondest affection, and in whom my every hope of joy was centered; what have

you brought upon yourself by this duplicity? and what misery have you in secret nurtured for your once joyous but now distracted parents. Farewell to happiness,—farewell to the long boasted respectability of Munster, whose sweet sequestered bounds, time immemorial, bore the enviable appellation of the seat of quiet.—Adieu to peace,—the Abbey is polluted from having fostered an unworthy being, and Munster can no longer boast of virtue. I now to my sorrow see the cause of your attachment to this your favourite walk. Artless as I thought you were, to find you involved in all the guilt of cunning, is too much,—too piercing to my afflicted heart.—I can no longer refrain from openly avowing my indignation,—patience is exhausted, and fortitude has forsaken me,—I am no longer armed against the frowns of fate.”—As he concluded this sentence, he exclaimed in a loud voice, indicating rage. “Aurelia, thy father approaches, prepare to meet him.”—

“Oh! Heaven! my father,” breathed Aurelia in extacy as she speedily approach-

ed: "Oh, my dear sir, what inexpressible joy your presence gives me."

"You act it well," returned Belford, coolly and reserved; much joy I should suppose this unexpected visit can afford you;—think not, however, base deceitful girl, that you shall longer carry on this cruel farce."

"Oh, sir," cried the lovely Aurelia, with tears flowing from her eyes, which bathed his hand, as she tenderly leaned on it;—"what can you mean by such expressions? till now, you ever treated me most tenderly?" "Till now, I ever did indeed, Aurelia," returned her father, "but I have reason, I think, to change my tone of voice; and, to be frank, I know a man lies concealed amongst these woods, conduct me to him instantly."

"Oh, sir," she replied, overwhelmed with grief at his observations, "You wrong me exceedingly; 'tis true, beneath yon hedge lies an unfortunate stranger, but why should I conceal him? poor soul, his helpless state has grieved me since I first beheld him, and

for his sake I have prayed heaven to direct some more powerful mortal to his aid than myself, and, when you approached, I did indeed believe my supplications had been heard."

"What means all this?" said Belford, with an air of composure, though in secret he upbraided himself, for having too precipitately formed an unfavourable opinion of his daughter, whose continued uniformity of conduct had justly entitled her to his confidence: "let us come to a more concise explanation."

"The stranger," returned the trembling Aurelia, of whom I have just given you information, was this evening thrown from his horse, to which unlucky accident I happened to be the only witness.—The cause of humanity urged me to fly to his relief, and, from the feeble state to which he was reduced from his wounds, I was induced to remain by him, and lend him what assistance lay in my power.—I was aware of the uneasiness you and my dear mother would experience at my absence,—but I was like,

wise aware of your desires on all occasions to relieve the distressed ; and concluded, that an act of common benevolence would compensate for all your sufferings, when circumstances were settled, and matters explained."

Belford leaned on his hand for some moments, indulging tears which flowed with rapidity, before he could utter a word in reply to his daughter's vindication :—At length, raising his head, and embracing her with his wonted affection, " Oh, my child !" said he, " most cruelly have I accused you, indeed, I can never pardon my rashness, and as for your forgiveness, I can never merit it.—What vicious bitter minded spirit could have invaded my bosom, and urged me to suspect my truly virtuous Aurelia?—Your unexemplified goodness, my child, vilifies me for such base conduct, and renders me contemptible.—Oh ! to resign for a moment my long reposed confidence in you, and on such weak grounds too, was too bad,—'twas worse than bad, 'twas malignant,—and that is too mild a term to give it,—it was the very cream of infamy ;

—surely some phrenzy must have overpowered my reason, or I could never have yielded to such conjectures.”

“ I entreat you, sir,” returned the incomparable Aurelia, as she seized the hand of her father, which she pressed with all the fondness of an affectionate and loving daughter, “ not to indulge these unhappy reflections which will not fail to oppress you ;—if you are satisfied with my conduct on this occasion, I am content, and every unpleasant thought is at once dispelled :—let our endeavours to relieve this helpless foreigner compensate for every misunderstanding : the sooner we convey him to the Abbey, the sooner will my dear mother be relieved from all her fears and apprehensions, which this event doubtless has loaded her with.”

“ Your goodness is too great,” rejoined her father pathetically : “ I am at a loss for words to express my thanks and gratitude for this return of kindness ; but let us not delay on this occasion of importance ; conduct me to the stranger that we may devise some means to convey him up to the Abbey,

where we may afford him necessary assistance to favour his recovery,—and when we will console your yet dejected mother.”

“ Oh, happy moment !” exclaimed Aurlia joyously, as she led her father towards the spot, who, on approaching the foreigner, took him by the hand with a degree of cordiality familiar to men of a compassionate mind ; and said, “ Good stranger, I am sincerely concerned for your disaster which my daughter has just afforded me a knowledge of, but my heart is cheered with some degree of satisfaction, and much gratitude towards Providence, for having directed me this night to your assistance. As delay in seeking a remedy for so unfortunate an accident, might be attended with such consequences as we are anxious to avoid, let me conjure you to allow me the peculiar pleasure of conducting you to my house, where every necessary assistance shall be immediately procured, and I trust you will experience early relief.”

“ Oh, charitable man !” exclaimed the foreigner, “ the kindness I have this night

experienced, must make a lasting impression on my mind, never to be eradicated but by the force of death.—The cordial and unreserved style in which you have offered me a tender of your services, inclines me, without hesitation, to accede to your proposal, by accepting your offer :—but permit me to ask, why you are so ambitious to receive a stranger under your roof, who may, perhaps, be but an impostor.”

“ Oh” returned Belford smiling, “ I am content to run the hazard of being deceived.—Suppose you were a man of this degrading stamp—in deceiving me you would greatly deceive yourself, and, of the the two, you would be most defrauded. I can never be entitled to censure for any act of injustice you might commit within the walls of my habitation, neither will my conscience ever feel disturbed or impaired for having received you under my roof ; but if I could submit to see you linger in misfortune, because I knew not whether you where honest or impure, I should doubtless merit the exe-

cration of man, and the wrath of the divinity.

It is enough that a man labours under affliction, to attract my notice ; and in cases exciting pity, I never suffer myself to reflect on the foibles of an individual, even where I have been previously apprised of his failings ; much less should I feel inclined to anticipate evils, and picture to my imagination vices which, perhaps, from having no existence, would bias me against an unfortunate person, I knew not for why ;—but let us not longer tarry in this place, the cold air of night will certainly encrease your pain, and retard your recovery.—I pray you, lean on my arm, and my daughter will support you on the other side.

The foreigner had now recovered sufficient strength to pace gently ; and in this state they proceeded towards the Abbey.

What a picture of benevolence !—how gratifying to the pencil of the artist, to trace the semblance of an unprotected foreigner, tottering in pain towards an hospitable man-

sion, supported by a tender female and her parent.—And, to bestow an higher colouring to the scene, to paint distress, which proved the strangers only recommendation, a state which never fails to gain the notice of a British heart, and all the aid a liberal hand can give.

Poor Mrs Belford, during this long interval of suspense, had yielded to innumerable gloomy apprehensions ; she was reduced to a state bordering on distraction :—The appearance of Belford accompanied by Aurelia and the foreigner, at length gave a turn to the tide of affliction, and suddenly dispelling every sable cloud, the aspect of serenity once more illuminated the venerable Abbey.

The servants, which Mrs Belford had sent to different parts of the village in search of Aurelia, during Belford's absence, were now all collected in the house.—The next object was to look for necessary medical assistance, which being quickly obtained, a servant was dispatched in search of the foreigner's horse, with which he shortly after

returned, when the party, resigning the stranger to the care of a trusty nurse, who was appointed to attend him during the night, retired to seek repose, so welcome after the toils encountered by the event of the evening.





MUNSTER ABBEY.

CHAP. VIII.

THE next morning, at an early hour, Belford repaired to the foreigner's apartment, anxious to enquire into the state of his health, when to his astonishment he found him in high spirits preparing to meet the family, and decked with a countenance descriptive of the vivacity naturally attached to the natives of France.

"I am rejoiced indeed," exclaimed Belford, shaking him heartily by the hand, "to find you so well and cheerful:—the alertness of your aspect renders it unnecessary for me to propose any question that may remind you of the late disaster." "I am, indeed," returned the foreigner, "considerably better than I expected to find myself."

after an event which bore every prospect of being attended with serious consequences :—but it is to you, Sir, and your amiable daughter, that I am indebted for so speedy a recovery ;—and the anxiety for the moment to arrive, when I might express my gratitude in the strongest terms I am master of, has been the cause of my never once closing my eyes since you deposited me in this chamber.”

“ I am concerned,” said Belford, “ that reflections so unnecessary should have, in any degree, deprived you of repose :—but as the ladies are anxiously waiting in the breakfast parlour, to learn the particulars of your present state, permit me to conduct you to them, when I am well assured your unexpected presence will be the occasion of much joy.”

Belford was not disappointed of the pleasure he anticipated at this meeting ; for, as they entered the room, Aurelia, elated with delight at seeing the foreigner restored, flew immediately towards him, and, taking him cheerfully by the hand, in a manner denot-

ing her approbation of his recovery, led him to her mother, when, in an elevated and enthusiastic tone of voice, she said, "Madam, permit me to present to your notice a late patient of mine, and tell me whether you do not think I have proved on this occasion a tolerable good physician?"

Mrs Belford received the stranger with a degree of cordiality corresponding with the benevolence of Belford and Aurelia, and congratulated him with much sincerity on his good fortune in escaping bad consequences, which might have attended an event so perilous.

"I confess myself greatly agitated," said the foreigner, who now felt anxious to make himself known, lest it might be suspected he was a person of low birth; "that I am surrounded by so benevolent a family, and that I have not an opportunity immediately of proving my own respectability; for be assured, it would give me infinite pleasure and satisfaction to cultivate a permanent acquaintance in this quarter, where the frequent exercise of virtue would afford me

innumerable opportunities of improving the features of my mind, which, in general, stand in need of many repairs :—but, as a stranger, the most I can hope for, is, temporary aid, and my recovery will not fail to prove my greatest misfortune, as it will direct me to withdraw myself from a mansion, under whose roof each hour seems to glide but as a moment of bliss.”

Tears escaped him as he concluded this sentence, and he appeared much agitated. —“ Suffer not these unnecessary reflections to oppress you,” returned Belford, “ we do not stand in need of any further proof of your exalted station in life, than the sentiments that have fallen from your tongue, and the style of elegance you have displayed in our language.—Independent, however, of these testimonies of the liberality of your education, be assured, my good Sir, the ancient roof of Munster Abbey, under which I am now honoured with your presence, was never raised for the purpose of sheltering those only who move in a line of prosperity sufficiently ample to afford them shelter in any quarter.—These walls were e-

levated for the reception of the helpless, and for the occasional accommodation of the wealthy, who are sure to experience becoming politeness and hospitality, when they solicit repose within them.

“ They boast no superfluous ornaments, which tend only to dazzle the eye, while the heart remains a stranger to the substantial uses of an asylum to protect the indigent : They are literally what they appear, well calculated to preserve us from the inclemency of rude weather, and if you feel the least desire to continue experiencing the humble comforts they encompass, it will indeed be your own fault, if we are not long gratified with the pleasure your presence only can afford us.” “ Oh Heaven ! Oh blessed St Benedict !” exclaimed the foreigner in an extatic tone, “ is it possible that still this mortal globe can boast a spot so pure and so unblemished !”

The conversation was here disturbed by a knock at the parlour door, given by Philip a faithful rustic domestic of Belford's, and in the same moment the ears of the party

were astonished by the uncouth sound of two mail-coach horns in the passage, which threw them into the utmost consternation, and which echoed through the ancient edifice, and seemed to shake the venerable walls, whose long repose in tranquillity had never before been disturbed by such offensive music.

“ What means this extraordinary bustle ?” said Belford, as he flew out of the room astonished, leaving the rest of the party in suspense equally amazed. “ Oh, master, master !” returned Philip in agitation, taking him by the coat, and desiring, with an air of authority, the two clowns who stood half frightened in a corner of the hall, with the horns ready to send out another hideous noise, to cease blowing while he made his speech, “ I would not dare to venture into the room before that great and monstrous Lord and Sovereign, that is so condescending and kind as to break bread with you.” “ You seem frantic !” rejoined Belford, “ in short, it appears to me a scene of madness altogether ! has any thing occurred to terrify you ?” “ Oh yes, master, great

wonders ! great things that will amaze you, as well as me, when you know them ! such things as will oblige you to walk differently into the room from what you did coming out ; for you can go back no way but on your knees I assure you."

" Indeed !—it must be something very extraordinary really, that shall incline me to a position into which I have hitherto only conceived it necessary to bend, when the exercise of christian duties demanded my attention." " Oh, sir ! you must indeed bend now then, for the first time, sir, for you must know that great personage who so condescendingly obliges the parlour with the honour of his Majesty's worshipful company, is a Marquis, and I dare say all his brothers and sisters are Emperors, and, for all we know, his father and mother may be a couple of Popes !"

Belford, unable to contain himself in consequence of the drollery which Philip's extravagant account displayed, burst into a fit of laughter which continued for some time with additional vigour, notwithstanding his

entreaties to moderate himself, lest he should offend the great man, whom he fancied had the power of hanging all the inhabitants of Munster at any moment. At length, recovering the power of articulation, which this curious narration had caused a suspension of, he asked through what channel he gained his intelligence, "Oh sir!" returned Philip, "there is a man now in the kitchen enquiring for the great,—I don't know what,—I suppose he is his servant, he calls him the Marquis of something, but I have forgot the name; indeed he speaks such odd English, that it is hard to find out what he says at all. Oh, sir! he has got a hat so covered over with gold, that it would dazzle your honour's precious sight to look at it; and I am sure, if it was to meet the weak eyes of my poor grandmother, it would strike her blind." "But what are these two clowns with the mail-coach horns here for?" said Belford.—"Oh, your honour is joking with me now; for your honour has been enough used to great company and high things, to know that people who are monstrous high and rich, are attended by horns like great warriors and fighters;—and so as we had

no brass French horns in the village, I thought it a good make shift, to beg Tom Bissett the mail-coach driver to lend us two of his'n, and so I galloped up to his house at Ivy bridge and got 'em.—My next look out was for two men that could blow them; and, after searching almost every house in the place, I found a couple of lads belonging to Finch the gardner, that cou'd do it; but I made them run so hard to make haste, that they cried out a hundred times on the way, they were sure they should have no wind left when they got here to make the horns sound.—Oh, I had a rusty tug of it myself; for to make speed I went on our black filly. Poppet, and in my hurry I forgot the saddle, so my poor bones have been nicely be-mauled, and I am almost joggled to death."

"A very curious piece of business, indeed," rejoined Belford, as he renewed his laugh: "Well, Philip, conduct this dazzling figure into the parlour; meanwhile, I shall inform the Marquis some enquiries have been made concerning him: As for Mr Finch's two lads, give them a couple of shillings for their loss of breath, and let them return

home. "I believe, sir, a person enquires for you," said Belford, addressing the nobleman as he entered the parlour, having by the aid of good breeding dispelled the titter which otherways might have escaped him: "May I be allowed to ask whether you are the Marquis De—De—."

"De Ville Neuve is my name," returned the stranger hastily, anxious to relieve Belford from his embarrassment, "I am rejoiced at this intelligence, as I conclude it must be my faithful servant, Henri, who makes the enquiry. He attended me yesterday, previous to the accident that befel me; but as I concluded he would discover some place for his accomodation, I would not mention him, from my unwillingness to make any addition to your incumbrance."

As the Marquis concluded this sentence, Henri entered, who, the moment he observed his master in health and spirits, fell on his face, and exclaimed, in a rapturous tone of voice, "By the holy St Francis thou art safe! Oh, blessed be the Ave Marias and Pater Nosters I have said for your sake. —Oh, Mon Seigneur! I have had a cruel

time of it.—The whole night have I wandered among bushes, briars, and brambles, overloaded with apprehensions that you were killed : but I won't think of these frights now : I am so rejoiced to see you safe, nothing can be like it."

The Marquis appeared much gratified at meeting his domestic, who, after a few observations had passed, was remanded to the kitchen, to partake of necessary refreshment.

The party, still anxious to learn the particulars of the horns, the harsh tones of which seemed yet to ring through their ears,—Belford described the ludicrous account he had received from Philip, which failed not to excite considerable mirth and merriment. The Marquis now, after many entreaties from Belford and his family, to consider the Abbey of Munster as his home, and to continue partaking of the comforts it could afford, promised, as a proof of his approbation, and the happiness he experienced, to spend some considerable time within the ancient walls.